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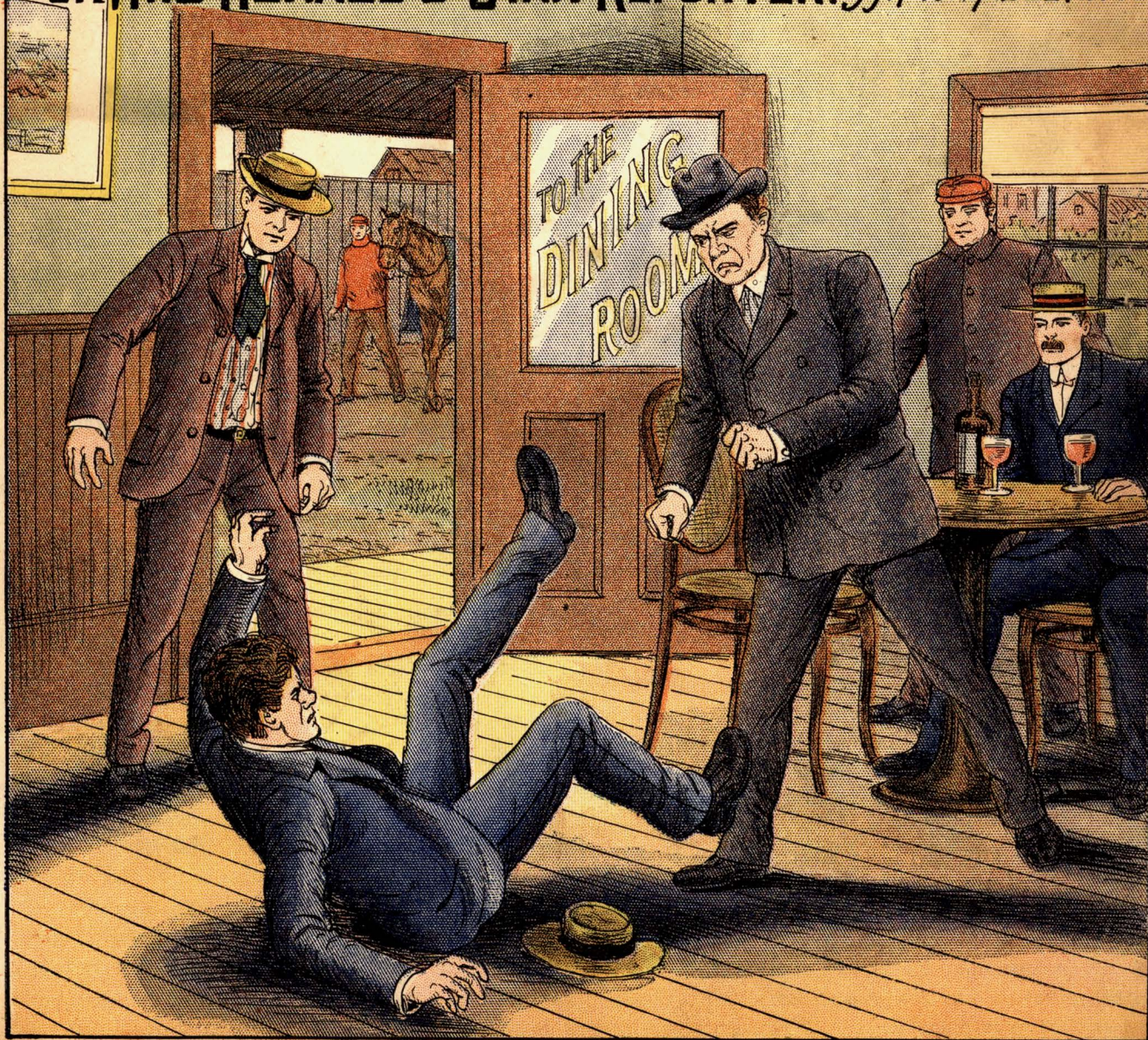
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WIDE AWAKE

A COMPLETE STORY **WEEKLY**. EVERY WEEK.

ON THE "LOBSTER SHIFT!"

OR, THE HERALD'S STAR REPORTER. *By A. HOWARD DEWITT.*



"So you wrote that roast, did ye?" roared Spike Dullivan. "A has-been, am I? I'll show ye!" Biff! Len was on his back, dazed, jolted—done up! I'll teach you a lesson in manhood, you cur!" groaned the young reporter.

WIDE AWAKE WEEKLY

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ON THE "LOBSTER SHIFT"

OR,

THE HERALD'S STAR REPORTER

By **A. HOWARD DE WITT**

CHAPTER I.

THE FUN OF BEING A LOBSTER.

"I wonder if lobsters ever know they're lobsters," sighed young Len Brown, the newest man on the Herald's "lobster shift."

"A lobster doesn't know anything. That's why he is a lobster," grinned Hal Pemberton, the departing night police reporter.

After that speech he was more of a departing reporter than before.

Young Mr. Pemberton fairly had to race for the door, followed by a shower of handy articles—a city directory, a telephone book, two empty ink-wells, a file of the Herald, and a lead paper-weight being among the things that flew after the flying night police man.

It was ten minutes past two in the morning.

"The 'lobster shift' had just gone on duty, Pemberton being the last of the regular night men to leave.

This "lobster shift" in a newspaper office is a growth of the new practice of issuing editions of a great newspaper all through the twenty-four hours.

The reporters who hustle to gather and write the news of the day begin to report at the office around noon on a morning newspaper.

Most of these men are through early in the evening.

The regular night men go off duty at about two o'clock

in the morning, just after the morning edition has gone to press.

Their place at two o'clock is taken by the "lobster shift," a wholly new set of editors and reporters who are on duty from two to eight a. m.

At eight o'clock in the morning the "lobster shift" is relieved from duty, and its place taken by the regular day force of the newspaper.

The "lobster shift" is a small staff.

There is a news editor, with two or three assistants in the news room.

There is a "lobster city editor" who looks after local happenings.

He has one reporter at police headquarters, another at the Tenderloin police station, and two kids in the office, who may be sent anywhere that news "breaks loose."

Oftentimes the two "general" men, as the reporters are called who remain at the office awaiting orders, spend their entire six hours at the office without being called upon to do anything.

It looked as if it would be Len Brown's fix on this late-in-the-summer morning.

Jake Bliss, the other general man, had been sent out on some sleepy kind of work, while Len hung about the news-room wondering whether anything would happen.

Randall, the lobster news editor, and his two assistants, were slowly reading through telegraph news that was too stupid to print.

Out in the city room Mr. James Curtis, twenty-five years old, and lobster city editor, sat with his feet resting on the

top of his desk. He was waiting for the first morning papers to read.

"Pemberton thought he was smart," growled News Editor Randall, as he threw a bit of typewritten tissue paper into the waste-basket under the table.

"Oh, it's all right to josh the lobsters," murmured one of the assistants. "I'll do it if I ever get off of this and on to the regular shift."

"Then I'll see to it that you never get off this shift," growled Randall under his breath. "Lem Brown, go out and take a nap in the waste-basket! It makes me nervous to see you fidgetting around like that."

Len, with a smile over his shoulder, stepped out into the city room, which is the room set aside for the city newspaperers.

It is worth while taking a look at Len as he sits at his desk.

Len was a little past seventeen. He had struck the great city not so many weeks before, having just left school and a country newspaper office behind.

He was not a large youngster, as frames and muscles go. Yet a physical trainer would have seen in him an active, enduring, wiry, and well-knit boy with good athletic possibilities.

He was a well-enough dressed youngster. His mother had seen to that before he left the home town, though it had taken a good bit of her little savings. Now Len was doing his best to pay her back by sending her three dollars a week out of the twelve dollars that he was lucky enough to be able to draw on the Herald's pay-day.

Twelve dollars a week! It sounds like "large money" to the average working-boy.

But to the young reporter who is trying to push his way to the front it is nothing. Unless he knows all about saving and buying cheaply, he will throw himself into debt. Len was just keeping on the ragged edge of finance.

He was a good-looking boy, brown-haired and blue-eyed—a hustler, a man, and a gentleman by disposition.

He had been "seeing life" in these last few weeks of night newspaper work! What had he not seen in the way of vice and crime in a great city! At times the boy grew sick and tired of all the sin and misery that come under the eyes of a night reporter.

"But there's a better side to life," he kept telling himself. "I'll see the brighter and sweeter side of life when I get promoted off the lobster shift. Will that time ever come, I wonder?"

For Len knew some of the star reporters of the Herald's regular staff. He longed to become one of them. What was much more, he meant to be one of them.

What chance had he? The same chance that any young man has in any kind of work—the chance that he can make for himself.

"Len Brown's a good boy," mused the city editor, as he glanced over to where his newest "kid" sat. "He does fairly well in these hours of the night, but I doubt if he ever works himself off the lobster shift."

But then Jim Curtis was only a lobster city editor!

He proved himself a very wide-awake one, though, a few moments later when the telephone bell rang.

"Hello! Yes. Yes. All right. Sam Devere? Copeland's. Thank you. Good-by. Brown!"

Len was on his feet before Curtis had hung up the receiver.

"Brown, you know who that young fool, Sam Devere, is, don't you?" demanded the city editor, looking keenly at our hero.

"Yes."

"Who is he, then?"

"Why, I suppose you mean the son of the great steel king, Richard Devere. Sam is a fool young man who has too much money to spend. He goes about town giving big dinners, buying wine for all sorts of people, and hangs out with a lot of fellows who call themselves sports, who drink his wine, borrow his money, and play him for a chump all the time."

"That's the young man," nodded Curtis. "Twenty-two years old, and a played-out fool. Well, he's been doing it again. Down at Copeland's all-night restaurant. He was in there drinking with two women followers, and had a fight with Dan Sweeny, the gambler. It was about one of the women. The two men fought all over the place until the waiters got 'em apart. Then Sweeny drew a revolver, which was taken away from him. He swears he'll kill young Devere on sight, and Sweeny has a reputation as a bad man, you know."

"Want me to go down to Copeland's?" asked Len.

"Yes; and get all you can about the row. Sam Devere is a well-known professional fool, and his father's bigness in the money world ought to make the yarn worth a column or more. Get the best you can."

Then, as Len hurried across the room, Curtis called after him:

"Oh, Brown!"

"Well, sir?"

"I hear that Spike Dullivan is around the Tenderloin to-night."

"He isn't never in a better place," uttered Len, disgustedly.

"But you know he has threatened to do you up for that article you wrote about him."

"I know it."

"Spike doesn't object to most of the article, but he's prime and sore over that bit in which you styled him as a back-number, has-been prize-fighter. Spike still thinks he's a star in the fistic world."

"He'll know better one of these days," smiled Len.

"Well, look out for him. Don't let him thump you."

"I'm a pretty fair runner, when there's any object in it," smiled the young reporter, as he turned toward the door once more.

Spike Dullivan, a few days before, had gotten into trouble through the very mean business of beating his aged mother.

He had been arrested, and Len, in his account of the affair, had piled contempt and ridicule all over the third-rate fighter.

Spike had been around to the Herald office with fight in his eye, and had gotten more than he wanted of it.

He had been thrown out forcibly by two husky reporters, but he had left word behind that he knew of Len Brown as the writer of the article, and that he meant to "settle" with the youngster.

But Len was not thinking of that bruiser now, as he darted down the stairs to the street.

Instead, he was wondering how he could get the much-wanted news at Copeland's. For that restaurant, frequented by the more foolish part of the city's rich and idle people, was a place where neither manager nor waiters could ever be induced to talk about any of the numerous rows and fights that took place there.

But a reporter has to get news whether he can or not—and he must get it straight, too.

As Len ran out through the street door he stopped short almost beside Hennessy, the night cop on the beat by the Herald office.

"Av ye do any more speedin' around here," Hennessy proclaimed, loudly, "I'll run yez in, and ye can tell the judge afterwards who yer father is."

Hennessy, very red-faced and indignant, was on the sidewalk at the front end of an automobile that he had held up.

"Why, it's Nat Pryor!" gasped Len, halting short.

Now, Nat was our hero's room-mate at the lodging-house.

In the past few weeks the boys had become solid and devoted chums.

Nat, also seventeen, had a craze for automobiles. He had worked in an automobile factory for a while, and now he had lately secured his first position as chauffeur at a garage.

Nat sat alone now, on the front seat of a big touring car that carried two broad seats back of the driver's.

The seat just behind Nat's was empty, but on the last seat of all was a rather good-looking but dissipated young man in his early twenties.

He sat between two rather flashily-dressed young men.

All three looked as if they had been going the pace that night.

"Officer, I know this chauffeur," broke in Len, anxiously, "I'm sure he's all right."

"I haven't a doubt of it, Len," replied the cop, good-naturedly. "If there's any more of this speedin' I'll have to run the lad in, though I know he ain't to blame, and only follows orders from that crazy galoot. It's Sam Devere himself I'd like to run in," added Cop Hennessy, behind his big, broad palm.

"Sam Devere?" gasped Len, in a low tone. "Is that the fellow?"

"That's Sammy, the dear boy!" mocked Hennessy, disgustedly.

"Fellows," announced the youth on the back seat of the big car, "I'm thirsty. What say?"

"Bottle of wine!" chirped one of the youths.

"And there's Durant's over there—just the place to get a bottle or two," announced the young man. "Come on!"

He got down out of the auto, rather unsteadily, followed by the other two.

All three went across the street, the two young men helping to keep Devere steady.

"A fine job his poor ould father had, earning and pilin' up money for that young galoot to throw about like snow-flakes," muttered Cop Hennessy disgustedly.

But Len was paying no heed to the policeman now.

"See here, Nat," he whispered eagerly, "were you down at Copeland's with the crowd?"

"Yes," admitted Nat Pryor, disgustedly. "That's what I get for driving a car for a public garage!"

Nat, also a country boy, was even more disgusted than his chum with the silly wickedness of a big city.

"Did you see the row between Devere and Dan Sweeny?" persisted Len.

"Slightly. I helped to pull young Devere off," Nat returned.

"Say, but this is luck," danced Len. "Tell me all about it, Nat, old fellow."

Getting down to the sidewalk, therefore, Nat launched into a story of the picturesque fight.

There was plenty of spice in it for a newspaper story.

"I hope I'll get through with this crowd soon, and I don't want to take 'em out again," Nat uttered, as disgustedly as he knew how to speak.

But Len, after thanking his chum, ran off upstairs to report to City Editor Curtis.

"Good thing!" commented that city editor. "Do it up for a-column and a half, and rush your copy! Throw in all the spice there is to it."

For the next hour Len did nothing but make his pencil fly over the paper.

He was on the last sheet of his story when Cop Hennessy poked his broad, red face in through the doorway. Then the big policeman trod heavily in and up to young Brown's desk.

"Len, me boy," grinned the officer, "your friend in the choo-choo cart has just started off. But he left a message for ye. Devere has just heard that Dan Sweeny is out at Cranston's road-house, and that's where Devere has just gone as fast as the law allows. The two byes are with him. Little Sammy is going to show his friends just how sassy he dare to be with a bad man like Sweeny. It's full of lead Devere'll be, in another half-hour, I'm thinking."

"See here, Brown," broke in City Editor Curtis, who had stood close enough to hear all this, "your tip is to hustle out to Cranston's as fast as you can go. If there's trouble you want to be on hand to see it. Somebody's going to get killed, unless Sam Devere gets a big grip on his common sense."

"I can't get out there quick enough on a street car,"

cried Len, jumping up and handing the last sheet of his copy to his chief.

"No, you can't. Go to the phone and call up the garage company. Order a car sent down here, and you make the fellow push it over the road. If there's a killing, or any other big trouble, you rush the stuff in here. We want it ahead of every other newspaper. Officer, I hope you won't say a word about this to any man on any other newspaper," finished up the lobster city editor, anxiously.

"Do ye think I'd be spoilin' a Herald scoop, and me on this beat t'ree years?" demanded the cop, indignantly.

Three minutes later Len Brown found himself in an automobile hansom, the driver of which, perched up behind, had orders to travel as fast as the law allowed.

"They told me, when I went on the Herald, that I'd have to get used to all kinds of life," uttered the young reporter, grimly. "But this goes ahead of anything I had expected. Why, I'm actually going out to the outskirts of the city to see if two men will back up their word about killing each other!"

A strange job, indeed!

Yet this assignment was carrying the young reporter on to what was to be more than a mere incident in his newspaper life.

CHAPTER II.

SPIKE TEACHES A THING, AND LEARNS TWO.

Cranston's—a resort of pleasure that never closed its doors.

It was a big place, out on the country road.

First of all, it consisted of a large hotel.

Behind this there was a garage and an immense stable.

And right close up against the hotel was the racing track.

Horsemen and other "sports" made Cranston's their headquarters.

Here, too, came the rich of the city, who could not spend their money fast enough in quiet ways.

"I wonder if anything has happened yet?" quivered Len, as his electric cab dashed up at the side doorway of the bar-room.

He stepped out slowly enough, as he did not care to attract attention to himself.

From the porch he passed into the bar-room, a rather illy-kept room.

Three men sat drinking near the door.

Len took a quick look at them.

"Devere's not in this room, and I don't believe any of those fellows can be Sweeny," thought the young reporter. "This bar-room is for the cheap part of the crowd. Those with money go to the private rooms upstairs. I wonder where Nat is?"

In order not to attract attention to himself, Len stepped up to the bar.

"Give me a seltzer, while I wait here for a friend," he said carelessly to the barkeeper.

He took his glass and went over to one of the tables.

"I'll drink this," he reflected, "and then, after a minute, I'll see if I can find Nat out around the garage."

It was still night, though one hardly felt it.

For Cranston's was in a blaze of electric light. It was proper that the place which never slept should banish night.

Outside a jockey was leading a horse up and down in the effort to slowly cool the animal after some fellow had driven the poor beast to a lather.

Down at the other end of the room the three men had called for fresh drinks, and were becoming noisy.

"And they call this seeing life!" uttered Len, disgustedly.

A heavy step made Len turn his gaze toward the door.

"Good gracious! Spike Dullivan!"

Spike it was, beyond any doubt. And the bruiser, at his first entrance, had got his eyes on the boy.

Spike stopped short, scowling. He was a powerful, square-shouldered brute. His fists, as he clenched them, looked like hammers.

"Glad to see ye, kid!" he roared, maliciously. "Don't run! It won't do ye any good!"

Len didn't speak, neither did he run.

Instead, he did the last thing that the ugly bruiser had expected.

Rising, his face a trifle white, but his carriage erect and his step firm, Len Brown walked unhesitatingly toward the bully.

"Eh?" gruffed Spike, curiously. "Maybe ye ain't the kid. Yes, ye are, though! Say, ain't ye one of the Herald lobsters?"

"My name is Brown," our hero answered, quietly. "Is that what you mean?"

"Ye're a Herald reporter?"

"Is that a crime?" demanded the boy.

"Ye wrote me up."

"Very likely."

"And roasted me!"

"That sometimes happens, too," smiled Len.

"I've been looking for ye," roared the brute.

"So I heard," Len answered calmly.

"And now I've got ye!" bellowed the big fellow.

"That part remains to be seen," retorted the boy.

"Say," glared the fighter, "have ye got the sand to say whether ye wrote that roast or not?"

"I don't always tell all I know," retorted Len, with just a bit of a laugh.

That laugh made the bruiser flare.

"Have ye got anything to say why I shouldn't soak ye?" demanded Spike.

"Nothing in particular," returned Len, calmly.

"Did ye write that roast on me in the Herald?"

"I did."

"What!" Spike appeared thunderstruck that this slip of a boy should dare admit it.

"I wrote the story, all right," Len insisted, calmly as ever.

"So you wrote that roast, did ye?" roared Spike Dullivan, leaping forward. "A has-been, am I? I'll show ye!"

Biff! Len was on his back, dazed, jolted—done up!

"I'll teach you a lesson in manhood, you cur!" groaned the young reporter, as Spike towered over him.

"Get up an' do it now!" leered the bruiser.

"You sneak!"

Clutch! A young man hastening in noiselessly in rubber-soled shoes had halted briskly behind Spike.

A pair of strong young arms fastened themselves around the fighter's neck.

Then there was no help for it. Spike had to go down on his back.

As he fell, his young assailant side-stepped and fell on the brute.

Biff! Thump! Spike wouldn't look pretty for some days to come.

"Foul!" bellowed Spike.

"Foul?" sneered his young assailant. "You never hit anybody anything but foul in your life! That's why they won't have you in the ring. Men who fight fair won't meet you. Foul—you stiff."

Spike, as if fearing to get up in straight fashion, rolled over on to his hands, presenting his back to the few spectators, who had now come around.

Swat! Spike got that squarely on the seat of his trousers—a heavy, sounding blow from a bung-starter in the active hands of the barkeeper, who had rushed up with his own peculiar weapon.

Spike stumbled forward, tried to recover himself, and so plunged forward through the doorway, landing on his face in the yard.

"Keep out of here!" commanded the barkeeper, swinging his big mallet. "We don't allow your kind in here, anyway."

Now the youth who had pounded both of Spike's eyes ran over to Len Brown.

But that youth, though a bit groggy, was already getting up as coolly as if nothing disagreeable had happened.

"Thanks, Nat, old fellow," smiled the reporter, standing against a table and feeling his throat where Spike's heavy fist had landed. "Spike was only trying to teach me a lesson."

"He's learned a couple for himself, too," flashed Nat, angrily. "Barkeep gave him one, and I passed over the other. Did he hurt you much?"

"Not as much as I'll hurt him, one of these days," smiled Len, coolly.

"You? What can you do to him, unless you manage to get him from behind, as I did?" Nat demanded, in amazement.

"Humph!" snorted Len, contemptuously. "Spike really is a has-been. He'd be nothing but a stiff before any real boxer. Well, I'm going to take lessons and be that boxer."

In about a fortnight Spike won't want more'n one meeting with me."

"Let him alone, if he'll leave you alone," advised Nat, readily. "Spike may be out of date, but there are a few bad streaks in his hammers yet."

"He'll give up the belt when I get after him," laughed Len.

The other bystanders laughed, too. Only Nat did not. He knew his quiet, resolute chum well enough to know that Len was not joking.

Spike, after a few growls, had taken himself off into the darkness. The other bystanders went back to their seats. Len led his chum over to his table.

"Your people upstairs, Nat?" he whispered.

"Just that," nodded the young chauffeur.

"Is Dan Sweeny here?"

"Search me," protested Nat. "I haven't heard a sound of trouble, though."

"Say, are you a Herald reporter?" demanded the barkeeper, who had come over to the table. He spoke in a low tone, so that the others in the room did not hear.

"Now, what put that idea in your head?" smiled Len.

"But that big bruiser, Spike, said you was," claimed the barkeeper.

"Do you generally take your pointers from a fellow like Spike Dullivan?" laughed the young reporter.

"Well, I only wanted to know whether you are a reporter or not," insisted the man. "Seems to me I heard you admit that you wrote something about him for the Herald."

"Maybe I did," smiled Len. "You can't expect me to remember all I say."

His face was laughing as he looked up at his questioner. With a sniff the barkeeper turned and walked away.

But just now a door from the hallway back of the bar-room opened, as the proprietor, Cranston himself, stood there a moment.

"Good-morning, Cranston," hailed a very quiet voice beyond.

"Oh, good-morning, Sweeny," replied the proprietor.

The two boys seated at the table caught just a glimpse of a rather undersized man in fastidious black clothes and soft white hat as he passed the open doorway.

"I heard friends were here looking for me?" drawled the man addressed as Sweeny.

"Don't know of any, Dan," replied Cranston, who was a big, portly, red-faced man.

"Devere here?" persisted Sweeny, in the same low, quiet, drawling voice.

"Oh, yes. He's up in twenty-two now," Cranston answered.

"That's the one, I guess, who wanted to see me. I'll just run up. Thank you, Cranston," replied the man with the quiet voice.

Cranston closed the door, stepping in behind the bar. Len Brown was on his feet in that same instant.

Two long bounds carried him to the bar.

"Mr. Cranston!" he called.

"Well?" demanded the proprietor, turning on the boy with a rather surly face.

"Was that Dan Sweeny, the gambler, you were speaking to just now?" Len queried.

"Herald reporter," whispered the barkeeper in his employer's ear.

"None of your business who it was," snapped Cranston.

"You'd better make it your business, then!" quivered Len. "Sam Devere and Dan Sweeny had a fight in town to-night. They were separated, but Devere heard Sweeny was out here, and came out to find and beat his man. You know what that means!"

"Good Lord!" quivered Cranston. "Do Dan up? Why, the man don't live that Dan won't shoot when he's riled. And he's a dead shot, too!"

"Better get 'em apart if you don't want trouble here," urged Len.

Without loss of a second Cranston turned for the door, yanking it open.

Flop! Over the bar went Len, at a vault, despite his late knockout.

Nat was right at his heels.

The two boys raced along the corridor in the wake of Cranston, who darted up the first flight of stairs to which he came.

"Now we'll settle this, Dan!" screamed the voice of an angry man.

"Help!"

That last cry came in a frightened voice. The shout of another added to the din.

"Not here," they heard Dan's voice protesting through an open doorway. "Come outside, you idiot!"

"I'll do it now!" vaunted Sam Devere's voice.

Cranston was at the open door of room twenty-two by this time, with the reporter and his chum only a few feet behind.

"For heaven's sake don't shoot, Sam!" wailed one of the youths in the party.

"He won't shoot," answered Dan Sweeny's cool voice.

"Won't, eh?" quavered the voice of young Devere.

Bang! The shot came just as the interferers dashed into the room.

There was a groan, a sound of something falling.

Dan Sweeny lay on the floor, bleeding from a hole in his right breast.

"Sam, you drunken idiot!" shouted one of the pair of young men.

But neither had dared go too close to the drink-inflamed young fellow.

Instead, both stood back, trembling in their fright, while young Devere, after a glimpse at his fallen enemy, chuckled as he stepped nearer.

"Dan," he uttered, thickly, "you've scared a good many people, and done up a few in your day. But to-night people will be telling each other that you got your finish from Sam Devere!"

"Put that gun up, you fool!" ordered the fallen gambler. "You'll be sick over this when you're sober."

But young Devere, with a sullen chuckle, raised his weapon and aimed, to finish his work of frenzied murder.

"Drop that gun!" quivered Cranston, dodging back.

But Len hadn't lost a second since breaking into that room.

Silently he had stepped around to the rear of the young rounder, who was too intent on his shooting to watch the boy.

Clutch! Len had pistol and pistol-wrist from behind. Sam Devere wheeled on the young reporter.

"Let go of me and of the gun!" he screamed, as he gripped angrily with our hero. "If you don't I'll finish you, too!"

"Keep still and listen to reason, man!" counselled Len.

"Reason nothing!" screamed the roused young rounder.

"Let go, or I'll finish you!"

They were fighting all around the room now.

Cranston and Nat were looking for their chance to jump in, but feared to rouse Sam Devere to the point of shooting our hero!

CHAPTER III.

THE FUGITIVE FROM JUSTICE.

"You idiot!" snapped Len Brown, as he fought for the possession of that pistol. "Do you realize that you're heading yourself for death in the electric chair?"

"Chair nothing!" screamed the crazy youth. "I'm Sam Devere—millions behind me! You're another fellow I'm going to kill! Leggo!"

But Len, panting hard, managed to hold on to the gun, for which the youth was fighting savagely.

Swat! Nat had found his chance to land a blow at last.

Struck on the head, Sam staggered back, letting go of the pistol.

Flop! Len's quick foot tripped the youth, sending him to his back in a jiffy.

Len slipped the revolver into his pocket, then flew to the side of Dan Sweeny.

"We'll have to get some help for you," quivered the reporter.

Cranston and Nat, too, were bending over the injured one.

Heavy steps were heard outside now, and a voice called out:

"Room twenty-two, officer!"

"The police already," muttered Len, looking up. "I'm glad of that."

All eyes were on the open doorway as the policeman bolted into the room.

"Where's the fellow that done the shooting?" demanded the policeman, hastily.

"Right th——" began Nat, quickly, wheeling to point to where Devere lay.

But the gilded youth was no longer there. He had disappeared from the room.

"He—he just jumped out," volunteered one of the two frightened youths, pointing to an open window.

Policeman and all hands save the injured gambler rushed to the window.

But Devere, if he had truly gone that way, was already lost to sight in the deep shadows that lay over the road beyond.

"Get someone to look after the wounded man," ordered the policeman, as he bolted for the door. "I'll try to catch the fellow that did the trick!"

Dan Sweeny, from whom few moans came, was lifted and carried out of this private supper-room into one of the near-by bedrooms.

One of the waiters was dispatched for a doctor in the neighborhood.

"It's me for the telephone," flashed Len to his chum. "Keep your eyes open, Nat."

"Great story!" sounded Curtis's enthusiastic voice over the wire, as our hero detailed what had just happened in this road-house. "Give me the full particulars, and I'll jot 'em down and write up the story. I want you for something else."

So Len supplied the last of the particulars of the suburban tragedy over the wire, then rushed off to see what the doctor had to say as to Sweeny's condition.

The wounded gambler was not very badly injured. He was likely to pull through unless blood-poisoning set in.

But Sam Devere was still at large, being hunted for by the police in the city and in all the towns around.

"Now, Brown, what I want you to do," came Curtis's voice over the telephone wire later on, "is this. Get into that electric cab of yours and travel as fast as you can to the house of old Richard Devere, the father of this crazy young fool. Sam Devere a fugitive from justice makes a great lobster story. What the father of the crazy fool thinks about it will add a heap to the story. Get to the house somehow—that is, get the old man to talk somehow."

Leaving the phone, our hero hurried out to his chum, told him what was up, then darted for the garage.

"Oh, the fools who turn a fool youth loose with the income of millions to spend in idleness and vice!" quivered Len, as he whirled cityward in his electric hansom. "This is what Sam Devere's father gets, now, for his generosity."

Ere long the electric cab was whizzing, in the early light of the coming day, down one of the most fashionable streets of the great city.

"A nice errand to wake an old man up on," sighed the young reporter, as the cab stopped before the great white marble front of the Devere mansion.

Running nimbly up the steps, our hero rang, at intervals, for fully five minutes before a man-servant with

tousled hair and clothing only half buttoned, opened the door.

"I know this is a very unusual hour," began Len, briskly, "but young Devere is in the greatest kind of trouble. Say that to Mr. Richard Devere, and add that it's necessary for me to see him at once!"

"But——" began the man-servant, protestingly.

"Yes, I know," nodded Len. "But you'll have to wake Mr. Devere. I simply must see him. You tell him that his son has committed a crime, and is a fugitive from justice."

"Good Lord!" ejaculated the man, falling back, surveying our hero with horrorstruck eyes.

"Yes, it's tough, but it's the truth," insisted our hero. "Tell him that someone is waiting to see him about his son. Let me in, and hurry!"

"Might you have a card?" asked the bewildered servant.

"I've got a badge," returned Len, gruffly, flashing back the lapel of his coat just long enough to show something glistening there.

The man-servant took the badge, as our hero had intended, as one belonging to the police department.

"Come in," desired the fellow, his voice shaking. "I'll take you into the reception room, and then notify Mr. Devere at once."

Len was shown into a dim, handsome reception room. The servant pressed a button that lighted the room brightly, then hastily withdrew.

Within a couple of minutes the man was back again.

"Mr. Devere is scared to death," he chattered. "Mr. Devere will be down just as soon as he can pull some clothes on."

When Mr. Devere came down the stairs a few minutes later he looked anything but scared.

He was a tall, erect, white-haired, fine-looking old man of seventy, with eyes that still snapped with much of the fire of youth.

His manner was calm, even though anxious.

He looked inquiringly at our hero, evidently surprised at finding his caller so young.

"You bring me some word of my son?" he inquired, in a full, deep, calm voice.

"Rather!" Len broke in, crisply.

"What has my son been doing this time?" queried the old man, eyeing our hero's face keenly.

"He's a fugitive from justice, Mr. Devere, and the charge is attempted murder. His victim may live, or may die!"

Len shot this information out plumply.

Mr. Richard Devere reeled just slightly, catching at the edge of the mantel before which he was standing.

It was a trick of the trade—the reporting "trade"—to catch one who is being interviewed off his guard.

Then, without changing color much, and in a steady voice, he commanded:

"Tell me all the particulars."

"A game, splendid old fellow!" throbbed admiring Len. "Why couldn't a boy with such a father amount to more?"

Mr. Devere listened attentively, without betraying much emotion, while Len described the scene at Cranston's.

"Do you suspect that my son is hiding in this house?" inquired the old man when our hero had finished.

"No," Len admitted frankly. He knew well enough that Sam Devere could not have gotten into this house, which was already watched, both at front and rear, by police detectives.

"Then what do you wish from me?" inquired Richard Devere, again sweeping the boy's face intently with those keen, flaming eyes.

"I came to ask you what you may have to say about your son's crime?" Len replied, candidly.

Though the old man seemed to wince slightly at the word "crime," he asked:

"Isn't it unusual for the police to ask such questions of fathers? For you are a messenger from the police department, are you not?"

Len hesitated just an instant.

He could not proclaim himself as a member of the force without breaking the law.

"But if I tell him just what I am he'll show me to the door," our hero pondered.

"Papa!" hailed a high, startled voice.

Then the door opened, and a young girl darted into the room.

"Papa, what is this dreadful news that Hodgkins says he carried to your room?" cried the girl.

Then she halted, looking half-startled, when she saw Len standing across the room.

"Your brother, Kate, has shot a man in a quarrel, and the police are looking for him," replied the old man.

"Oh, you don't mean——"

The anguish-struck girl could go no further, sobs choking her voice as she staggered forward.

Her father caught her in his arms, holding her up and patting her gently.

"It's a blow, of course, Kate, but we must face it with the Devere courage," the old man assured his weeping daughter as he stroked her hair tenderly.

Len felt almost as if he wanted to cry himself. In this house of sorrow he felt more uncomfortable than he had ever felt anywhere in his life.

Kate Devere was as much like her father as a daughter can be.

Like him, she was tall and erect—queenly, in fact, in her carriage, yet with the lithe, swift movements of the athletic girl.

Her face seemed more than queenly to stirred-up, sympathetic Len. It was truly a beautiful face, with great, brown, affectionate eyes that looked out on the world courageously and yet trustingly.

"Is this young man from the—from the—police?" she asked, trying to steady her voice, as she looked at our hero.

"Yes," her father replied, at once.

"A mistake, sir!" broke in our hero, promptly.

Whether he could get an interview or not from this remarkable old man, our hero's whole soul now revolted at the thought of sailing under false colors.

"Not from the police?" cried Mr. Devere, showing the most surprise that he had yet betrayed. "Then——"

"I'm a reporter on the Herald," Len put in, honestly.

"A reporter?" echoed Mr. Devere, aghast.

"A reporter?" echoed his daughter, still more aghast.

"I am a reporter," Len assured them both. "Also, I was present at the shooting."

"Must this disgraceful thing go into the newspapers?" faltered the girl, again reeling, and clutching at her father. "Poor, dear, impulsive, foolish Sam! Must his disgrace be printed and sold to the whole world?"

"Ask this young man," suggested the old man, grimly. "He appears to be the only reporter who knows of the affair yet."

"Oh, surely, papa, with all your money you can stop this dreadful thing from being published!" cried the girl.

"Can I?" inquired Mr. Devere, almost hopefully, as he turned to our hero.

"No, sir!" Len answered, promptly.

"But I can spend thousands—tens of thousands—hundreds of thousands!"

"It won't do you a bit of good to think of it, sir," Len replied, promptly. "The police have sent out calls everywhere for the arrest of your son. The newspapers will all get hold of the affair from the police records. There is no way whatever, sir, of stopping the printing of the story. Every evening paper will have columns about it."

The girl, leaning on her father's arm, stood looking at the boy with her eyes full of horror.

"Mr. Reporter," broke in the old man, almost calmly still, "state exactly what you are here for?"

"May I speak with you alone, sir?" asked Len. He hated to probe into the affair with this great-eyed girl looking at him so piteously.

"Kate, my dear, leave the room," desired her father. "I will call you soon."

"I shall be on the other side of the door," declared the girl, as she went.

"I have not shown politeness enough to ask you to be seated," proceeded Mr. Devere, when the door had closed. "Be seated, please."

Len sank down to a sofa, the old man sitting beside him.

"Now, what do you wish to know of me?" asked the old man.

Len had already nearly all that he wanted to know. The description of the scene he had just witnessed would make magnificent newspaper material.

"Why, sir, all I wish to know is what you have to say about your son, and his past life."

Mr. Devere seemed perfectly candid in the talk that fol-

lowed, but it was plain that he had slight knowledge of how Sam had been passing his time.

"I gave him an abundant income, and he seemed to be enjoying life," the old man confessed.

"Would you like to know just what kind of a life your son has been leading?" asked our hero suddenly.

"Very much, indeed, if you can tell me."

Then Len told the father all that was known of Sam Devere's wild, wasteful, riotous, vicious life around the city.

Mr. Devere listened as one thunderstruck, but he did not lose his gritty grip on himself.

As Len finished speaking the old man sat silent for a few moments.

Then he looked keenly once more at the boy.

"Young man, either you must be many years older than you look, or else you are a very wonderful youngster! Surely one so young as you would not be trusted to write for a great newspaper unless he was extraordinarily clever and possessed the soundest judgment."

Len smiled grimly to himself, as he thought of the other "kids" like himself who served in the smallest reportorial positions on the city's newspapers.

"Now that you have interviewed me, Mr. Reporter," went on Mr. Devere, "I wish to interview you. In what have I done wrongly by my son—for I must have done wrongly, or he would not have turned out a criminal."

"You have given him a fortune every year to spend, and haven't kept any track of how he spent all those tens of thousands of dollars," our hero shot back promptly. "With the worst kind of advisers and companions your son has gone over the worst road, as hundreds of other rich men's sons are doing in this city."

"I have done wrong," sighed the old man. "I see it. But now what should I do?"

"As the young man's father, you are bound to stand by him."

"Thank you for saying that," breathed a soft voice beside them.

Turning, both saw Kate Devere, who had noiselessly entered the room again. Her big eyes were beaming gratefully on Len Brown.

Mr. Devere took the girl's nearer hand in his own, as he asked:

"Should I help Sam to escape if he communicates with me?"

Kate gave a quick start, as our hero replied:

"No one ever expects a father to betray his own son into the hands of the police."

"Thank you again," murmured Kate.

"I beg your pardon, sir," cried the servant, Hodgkins, from the open doorway, "but there's a man here who says he must see you at once."

"Let him come in," sighed Mr. Devere.

A rough-looking character, short, stocky, blear-eyed and seedy, a man of about forty came into the room, look-

ing shiftingly and uneasily around him and at the three others.

"Mr. Devere?" he demanded, in a thick voice, then handed over an envelope as the old man nodded.

Kate caught her breath while her father opened and read the note.

"This man knows what he bears," went on Mr. Devere, "so it can do no harm to state that the note is from your brother, Kate. He asks me to send him two thousand dollars in cash by this messenger."

"Oh, you'll do it?" cried the girl, coaxingly.

But Mr. Devere looked at our hero.

"No!" said Len, promptly, and Kate shot at him a look of angry reproach. "The police spies are front and back of this house," our hero went on. "They saw this fellow come in, and they guessed his errand. When he goes out again they'll shadow him to the hiding place of your brother, Miss Devere—of your son, Mr. Devere. If you want to save the young man, this fellow mustn't be allowed to leave the house."

"But how can we——" began Kate, pleadingly.

"Tell me where to go—and I'll go myself!" declared Len, promptly. "But without the money."

"Why without the money?" inquired Mr. Devere, quickly.

"Because, sir, it's about time to stop giving your son money without knowing what he means to do with it. I'll go to your son, sir, and bring you a longer message from him. Then you can decide what to do. Will you trust me?"

"Wait!" commanded Mr. Devere, and, rising, left the room hastily.

"As a reporter I can leave this house and come back again, without attracting suspicion," Len explained to the girl.

She stepped forward in front of him, quickly, firmly caught his hands, and looked intently into his eyes. Len rose to his feet.

"You'll be Sam's friend?" she implored.

"I'll be your friend—gladly—Miss Devere. Your father's, too. Won't that do as well?"

"You don't like my brother?" she queried, with a quick catching of the breath.

"I don't know him yet," Len evaded.

"Here is the money—two thousand dollars," announced Mr. Devere, coming quickly back into the room. "Take it, young man. You see, I trust you because I am compelled to. More than that, I feel, somehow, that I am as safe in trusting you as I would be with another son."

"Don't let this fellow leave the house," directed Len, as he pocketed the money without any remark about it. "Pay this fellow what you have to to keep him here. You will hear from me some time to-day. Now, for the address where I can find Sam Devere."

The seedy-looking fellow supplied the address—that of a cheap lodging-house, far downtown, which, as our

hero shrewdly guessed, was that of a house frequented by shady characters.

"I am going to my office first," announced Len, straightening and holding out his hand respectfully to the old man. "The Herald is printing this whole story, as every other newspaper in town will do. That can't be stopped. But, as soon as I have done my duty by my newspaper I shall seek your son, Mr. Devere, your brother, Miss Devere. I shall do my best to serve you both."

"I am sure of that," assented the old man, sadly.

"And you serve Sam, too!" cried Kate. "Give the poor, dear, foolish boy all my best love!"

There were tears again in those glorious eyes.

But, for just an instant, Kate ran forward, catching our hero's hand, peering searchingly into the depths of his own eyes.

"Do you think the police will be able to find Sam?" she asked, in a very low voice.

"I shan't help the police to, if that's what you mean," he answered her, with a slight squeeze of her hand.

"Thank you," she said simply, and fell back.

"And now, good-morning, both of you, and keep up good heart," finished Len, as he turned toward the door.

The last he saw of Kate her eyes were turned on him. He thought those splendid brown eyes looked wholly trustful.

Hardly had our hero left the step at the sidewalk when a man moved swiftly forward in our hero's way.

"Reporter," Len announced, displaying his badge.

"Oh!" acknowledged the plain-clothes policeman, stepping back. "See the folks?"

"I saw Mr. Devere."

"What did he have to say?"

"About as little as you'd expect," rejoined Len, with a smile.

"What about that tough-looking character that went into the house?"

"I didn't see any," Len lied.

He stepped into his cab, and was whirled to the office.

"Lord, your little assignment last night has turned into the star story of the day!" glowed City Editor Curtis.

Going to his desk, Len wrote what he chose to of the conversation and the scene at the Devere mansion.

By the time that our hero was through writing, the day force was in charge of the office.

"Now," muttered Len, as he turned away from handing his copy to the day editor, "now for the real part of a newspaper man's story—the part that is never written! Lord, but it seems queer for me to be aiding in the escape of a fugitive from justice! I wonder if it's right?"

No doubts, however, kept the young reporter from hastening downtown on a street-car.

He found the house in question, ascended the front steps, rang the bell, and presently found the door opening under the hand of a big, thick-set, red-whiskered and red-haired man.

"I've come to see Mr. Price," Len announced, speaking

as coolly as he could. "Tell Price that I come from his father," our hero added, in a whisper.

"Come inside," directly the red-whiskered one, gruffly.

Len waited in the front hallway while the red-whiskered one went upstairs, where he remained for at least five minutes.

"Come on up," called the man, at last, reappearing at the head of the stairs.

Len started slowly up the rickety stairs.

As he neared the top of the flight the white, ugly-set face of Sam Devere showed at the baluster rail behind the ascending boy.

Sam's eyes glanced along the barrel of a shotgun aimed at the young reporter's head!

CHAPTER IV.

THE MADMAN.

"What ails you?"

Len shot the question out curiously.

For the sudden antics of the red-whiskered one were, to say the least, suspicious.

That worthy, looking highly alarmed, jumped swiftly to one side of the head of the flight.

In the same instant that he put the question Len Brown threw himself forward on his hands, and twisted his head around.

"Gracious! Don't!"

The two words shot out almost as one word.

Len found himself looking down the two barrels of a shotgun, the muzzles of which were less than eight feet away.

There, behind the gun, his eyes glaring like those of a madman, was Sam Devere.

Had our hero not turned as he did, the rich young madman would have fired into the back of his visitor's head.

The position was still just as nerve-racking.

Only the pressure of a finger on the trigger was needed, and Sam's hand did not tremble.

But the madman's face showed that he enjoyed the swift terror of his victim.

"Two in one night! What luck!" chuckled Sam, in a tone so ghastly that it made Len shiver almost as much as the sight of the gun did.

With death staring one in the face, the thoughts move rapidly.

Our hero had had no doubt, since the other shooting at Cranston's, that Sam Devere was a madman.

A lunatic, since he does not fear consequences, is utterly reckless.

He cannot be hindered through fear.

Yet the lunatic has one weak point.

His mind utterly unsound, he considers himself to be the sanest person alive.

An appeal to a lunatic's reason will serve when no other appeal can.

"You're not as reasonable as usual," Len ventured, inwardly fearful that this ruse would not keep back the shot that must blow the top of his head off.

"Not reasonable?" cried Sam Devere.

"Your mind doesn't seem as clear as it was earlier in the night," Len went on.

His heart had given a great leap from joy when he got this answer out of the madman.

It gave hope that he might yet succeed in staving off the plainly intended murder.

"Do you know why you don't seem to be reasoning well?" Len went on.

He was still looking at Sam, and the twisting of his neck made that part tremble and ache.

"Why?" asked the young madman with the gun.

"Why, you don't seem to understand that I have come as a friend," Len replied.

He heard the panting of the red-whiskered one, who had halted half-way between the pair, and now stood well back against the wall.

"Huh! The same kind of a friend Dan Sweeny was!" jeered Sam.

"Not at all," replied Len. "I come from your father."

"Prove it," came the sneering answer.

"How?"

"Do you know what I sent for?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"You sent for two thousand dollars in cash," Len replied, briskly.

"Do you bring it?"

"No."

"Then you don't come from my father," cried Sam, savagely. "He would have sent five times as much had I asked him for it. So you die."

"You've got too much and too fine reason to make any mistake by shooting before you've heard all," Len argued.

"Well, what else have you to say?"

"I have been sent by your father to take you from here to a place of safety," Len went on.

"Oh, I know that trick!" jeered Sam. "The old trick! The place of safety would turn out to be the police station."

The red-whiskered man, squeezing back against the wall as far as possible out of harm's way, uttered a single, low, scornful:

"Huh!"

"Your reason will tell you that I'm speaking the truth," Len argued, desperately. "Come, get your fine reason at work on the subject. Here you would not be safe, for the police will begin to look through such houses. Now, as soon as I get you from here the people here are to be re-

warded by a few thousand dollars, if they keep quiet about your whereabouts."

Len did not attempt to glance in the direction of the red-whiskered one, but he heard that individual breathing more quietly.

Our hero knew that the bait was working with this stranger.

"Another thing will show any reasoning man that I didn't come here to help the police," our hero hurried on.

"What?"

"Why, if the police had known you were here they'd have surrounded the house and then broken in the door. Now, you're a man of fine reason, Devere. Don't you see the point?"

"Maybe," hesitated the madman. "But you've got to die, anyway!"

Len's heart almost ceased beating.

The tone in which that sentence was pronounced showed how thoroughly it was meant.

More than that, Len's frightened eyes saw the brows of the madman contract as a man's brows do when he is about to fire.

Jump! The red-whiskered one to the rescue!

That worthy, watching his chance, had suddenly leaped forward, kicking up the muzzle of the shotgun.

Bang! The report of the discharged barrel sounded deafening in that small, confined space.

R-r-r-rip! A charge of shot scattered against the wall past and higher up than our hero's head.

And now the red-whiskered one was tussling violently with Sam Devere, who, though of much slighter build, was fighting with all the desperation of a madman.

They were busy now, this pair, struggling close to the wall.

The gun, one barrel still smoking, was lying on the floor close to the baluster.

Like a flash Len was up away from the stairs, out on the landing, and headed straight for the gun.

Before either one of the struggling men could interfere our hero had caught up the weapon.

"It's all right now," our hero spoke coolly to the red-whiskered one. "Don't hurt the poor fellow. He meant all right."

At the word the red-whiskered one stepped back from Sam, who, now that the struggle was over, collapsed weakly to the floor.

"Let me have the gun," commanded the red-whiskered one.

He reached out and took it before Len, his eyes on Sam, understood what the move meant.

"One barrel still loaded," softly announced the big fellow, backing off toward the head of the stairs and halting there.

Now Len understood with a jump and a throb.

"Why, confound you!" laughed the young reporter, though he felt shaky, "you're not crazy, too! You go on

and make a fuss here, my friend, and you'll bring the police in sure enough."

"If that shot don't bring 'em, another one won't," remarked the big man, doggedly.

"If the police do get in, you'll be out all your big profit on this job," Len Brown argued, coolly. "See here, my friend, I really am sent by the father of this young man. I'm sent to get him out of his trouble."

"You don't either one of you get out of here until I'm paid for my trouble," growled the fellow.

"And, confound him, he means that," reflected Len, studying the grim face of the man with the auburn whiskers. "No use arguing with him, either, for he isn't crazy—only suspicious."

"See here," hinted the fellow, cunningly, "you may be all right, and I'm not saying that you ain't here on the square. But I've got to make sure."

"How can you do that?" Len wanted to know.

"Easy enough. Of course, we know who this young man is. Now, I'll send another of my people to old Devere, and with a description of you."

"That won't do," Len declared, very positively.

"Why won't it?" asked the fellow.

"Because the police are watching the house uptown, back and front. One of your men went in, and he'll be pinched the second he comes out. So I've told this young man's father to keep your messenger in the house for the present. Now, you send a second man up, and the police will figure that the second man has gone to see what happened to Number One. So they'll pinch Number Two without giving him a chance to get inside the house. So the only thing I can do is to take this young man with me."

"No, you don't," growled Red-beard.

"Don't what?" Len inquired, as if in surprise.

"You don't take this young gentleman out of the house until I've had my divvy for the job. Do you suppose I'm going to lose a good thing like that?"

With a flash of joy our hero wheeled upon the madman.

"Hear that, Sam Devere? You thought yourself among friends. Now you find they're holding you for ransom!"

"Shut up!" ordered Red-beard, gruffly.

"It's the truth," defied Len. "I leave that to your own reason, Sam. You think you're among friends? Just try to leave this house, and see what kind of friends they are."

"Well, of course we've got to have our pay," uttered Red-beard, in a still more surly tone.

"So you see, Sam!" flashed the young reporter. "Real friends, aren't they? You're a prisoner here! Don't dare for your life to try to leave here!"

"Don't I, though?" cried the madman, his eyes now blazing fiercely at Red-beard.

With a sudden move Devere hurled himself fairly in front of Red-beard.

"Give me back that gun!" he insisted hoarsely.

"Look out!" Len cried, warningly.

"What do you want the gun for?" jeered Red-beard.

He thrust the shotgun behind his back.

It was for exactly this thing that the young reporter had planned.

Catch! With a quick twist Len had the gun.

Click! The hammer on the loaded barrel was up, and Len was holding the weapon just the way he wanted it.

"Downstairs with you, quick, old Red-whiskers!" ordered Len Brown, in the tone of one who meant to be obeyed.

"Ye don't dare!" sneered Red-beard, who, nevertheless, had shrunk back from the muzzle of the weapon.

"No time to argue about it!" crisped out Len. "Bother me and I'll shoot first and argue afterwards. I'll shoot, too, if you waste a second about getting downstairs. Hurrah, Sam! We can have our way now, and see whether you are to be kept a prisoner against your will. Start downstairs to show this rascal that you'll do as you like. March, Red-beard!"

Wheedled successfully, Sam Devere darted down the stairs.

With an angry grunt that was half roar Red-beard started to follow—for there was a nasty look in Len's eyes that did not make argument look like a good business at this moment.

"If any of your people try to sneak up behind me I'll finish you first, anyway," called Len, just loud enough to be heard by any prowler who might be sneaking near.

It was a ticklish house to be caught in, especially when the first discharge from the gun had failed to bring any rescuers near.

Sam Devere, with an almost half-witted chuckle, unfastened the street door, and pulled it open.

"Stand out of the way, Gold-whiskers!" called Len, mockingly, as he neared the foot of the stairs just behind the keeper of the house. "I want to use that door, too."

With the utmost care our hero made his way past the surly one, who lingered close to the door.

But, as he went through, out on to the stoop, young Brown leaned the gun against the door-frame.

"We fooled 'em in great shape!" grinned our hero, as he ran nimbly down the steps to where Sam stood blinking in the sunlight.

"What now?" asked Sam, almost suspiciously.

"We want a cab, and here comes one. Sh!"

Len's hand went over Devere's mouth as that young man started to speak.

Then Len felt a sudden jolt.

If they left in this fashion, Red-beard would have only to send an anonymous note to the police.

"That would dish everything," realized the boy with a start. "Land me in jail, too, for helping a fugitive to escape, I'm afraid. But what can a fellow do, after he's seen a father like that—and a sister like Kate!"

The cab was coming up to the sidewalk.

"Get inside," whispered our hero. "Wait for me a moment, and then we'll fool everyone."

Sam got inside the vehicle, like one who had become dazed after too much excitement.

Len, whose mind had been working like lightning, murmured to the driver:

"Move on a few doorways down the street and wait for me. There's money in this thing if you do it right. Keep your eye on the young man inside. Don't let him get away."

As the cab rolled away, Len took out the thick pad of large bank-notes that old Richard Devere had handed him.

With a smile Len looked up at the house.

Yes; there, with the door open only a crack, stood his recent, surly enemy, peering cautiously down.

"Yes; this means you!" called the boy. "Come down and get it—the quicker you come, the more you get!"

Laughing, Len received Red-beard, who came dashing down the stone steps.

Here, out in the daylight, even on a cross street on which there was not much traffic, our hero was not in the least afraid of the fellow.

"I told you, upstairs, I meant to use you right," smiled the boy.

"Go ahead and do it, then," begged Red-beard hoarsely, his eyes big and wide open as he took in the size both of the roll and of the banknotes in it.

"A thousand's about right for a starter, ain't it?" asked our hero, pleasantly.

"Make it two, and I'll keep mighty mum about everything," promised Red-beard in an eager whisper.

"No; you'll get a thousand, just as I said. Gold-whiskers, the great trouble with you this morning has been that you've wanted to run things, instead of letting me do it. Now it's my say, and a thousand's what you get."

Len rapidly peeled off the bills, rolling up the wad and passing it to Red-beard.

"Now, whether you get any more and how much you get depends on just how still you keep," Len went on, in a low tone, while he thrust the balance of the two thousand in a trousers pocket and kept his hand on it there. "I know how you'll figure it out, Gold-whiskers. You're thinking you can go up to Mr. Devere and make him pony up more. You can't. You'll only spoil the whole game by that trick, and get us all pinched, yourself included—for, if you squeal on us we'll do the same by you. So hold your tongue, lie low, and wait until we send you something that'll please you. It's the only possible way for you to get any more of this green stuff that you probably know as dough. Savvy?"

"Yes," assented Red-beard, hoarsely.

"Then keep good and silent—and good-by for a while."

Still with a smiling face Len ran off up the street, found the cab, and jumped into it.

Sam Devere was there, looking both moody and suspicious.

"We'll soon be where we're safe, and after this you'll trust me," Len promised, with an easiness that he was far from feeling.

Who bothers, though, to look in a cab, even when the police are searching for a man who has tried to do murder?

Len was never safer, as it turned out, than when he rode beside this fugitive for whom hundreds of policemen were hustling.

In less than half an hour they reached the house in a little side street where Len and Nat Pryor lived together in a little room at the top of the house.

And Len, with a suitable explanation to cabby, and the payment of an important-looking banknote, had the driver silenced.

So, at last, the reporter and the man he had rescued were in the room on the top floor, with the door locked.

"Whew!" panted Len Brown.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAN ON THE ROOF.

"Is this all some wonderful dream?" sighed Kate Devere.

"A dream, Miss Devere? Oh, dear, no!"

"Then what is it?"

"The things that have happened in the past week, Miss Kate, are merely illustrations of the wonders that money and time can accomplish."

"I never dreamed that I should be happy again," cried the girl, her eyes filling with tears. "And now, dear old Sam——"

A week had, indeed, seen wonderful changes.

It had been a hustling week for Len Brown.

He had done much, yet did not regard any of it as having been wonderful.

"The power of the press" is an old and trite saying.

What very few people realize is the great power that a reporter on a great newspaper often wields.

Every public official has reason to want to please one newspaper man or another.

First of all, our hero had gone after the district attorney.

Not acquainted with that official himself, our hero had asked another and older Herald reporter to see the district attorney.

As a result, the public prosecutor had shown little interest in the Devere-Sweeny shooting affair.

As the result of other influence that Len had succeeded in bringing to bear on the police through another

brother reporter, the police had gradually paid less and less attention to catching Sam Devere.

Len himself had gone to Dan Sweeny, the gambler, who, now in a hospital, was mending slowly, but in no danger of dying.

Sweeny had at last been persuaded not to prosecute, and to say that he did not care to prosecute.

Then old Richard Devere's lawyers got to work—and so, all around, it was soon an understood thing that the police didn't want to catch Sam Devere, and that the district-attorney didn't think much of prosecuting the young man.

And so, at the end of the week, Sam had been brought to his own home, and all the world might know he was there—if the world cared.

In that week a young physician, sent by the Devere family doctor, had spent his entire time with Sam.

First of all, young Devere had been kept under the influence of drugs, for his temporary madness had resulted from drinking too freely, and from the shock of the attempt at murder.

But now Sam was not only safe from the police, but also very close to being in his right mind.

He was in the library now, talking with his father, while Kate, in a pretty little reception room, was trying to make Len Brown realize how grateful all three of the Deveres were.

"You are such a wonderful young man!" she said, after a pause.

"I wish you could persuade them of that at the office," laughed Len, merrily. "Do you know what they call me there? A lobster."

"A lobster?" Kate repeated, looking highly puzzled.

"At least, I'm on the lobster shift."

But Kate still looked so puzzled that he had to stop to explain all about the slang meaning of "lobster."

"You won't be a—a lobster long, then," Kate declared, with great positiveness.

"I hope not," smiled the young reporter.

"That's the third time you've looked at your watch lately," Kate observed, as our hero once more fidgetted at his time-piece. "Are you really in a hurry to go, Mr. Brown?"

"Not as a matter of choice, Miss Devere. But—well, you know, reporters have to be at their offices promptly, and sometimes ahead of time."

"Then you're going soon?" Kate asked, with evident disappointment.

"I must try to wait until I can see your father. As you must remember, Miss Kate, your father handed me some money a week ago. He has all along refused to have any accounting of it, telling me to keep it as expense money until I had your brother clear of my care. But that time has come, and I still have several hundred dollars left."

"I am still refusing to take an accounting," broke in the deep voice of old Richard Devere. "Since you have refused to accept any reward, or fee, for all that you have done, Brown, I also refuse to hear of an accounting."

Len flushed, but did not think it wise to argue the matter before the girl.

"I just came in for a moment, to make sure that you had not gone before receiving my further thanks for all the happiness you have brought us on this great night," Mr. Devere went on, easily. "I can't express my thanks, but I wish again to assure you that they are yours."

"If you say any more about it, sir," Len replied, slowly, "you will deprive me of a great pleasure."

"And what pleasure is that?"

"The pleasure you held out to me of being able to call here once in a while."

Mr. Devere smiled, while Kate cried, reproachfully:

"Only once in a while? Then we are to suffer, as well as you, Mr. Brown. You would deprive us of the pleasure of talking with one who sees as much of the great world, and does as much in it, as you do."

"That's what society folks call pleasant talk," Len told himself.

"But really, this is early to think of going," protested Mr. Devere. "It is not yet ten o'clock, and you have told me that you are not due at your office until two in the morning."

"Sometimes we are expected earlier," replied the young reporter.

"Then I shall consent to your going," agreed Mr. Devere, "only on your promise that you will soon be here again of an evening."

"I am glad of your permission, sir."

"Try to thank him better than I have done, Kate," suggested her father. "And now good-night, Mr. Reporter—on the understanding that you are soon to be here again."

And Richard Devere fled from the room, principally because he feared that Len would again make an effort to return the money that the old man wanted him to keep.

"If you didn't find me such dull company I am sure that you would manage to remain longer this evening," pouted Kate, when her father was gone again.

"If that is the way you judge me," laughed Len, "then I'll stay until I prove myself the bore that I am certain I must be."

"That's better," cried the girl.

She really looked delighted. But Len, with a reporter's training in distrusting people, wondered how much of that delight was real.

He wished, as he looked at her, that he really might call often without being cheeky.

For Kate Devere was really well worth looking at, well worth talking with—in a word, it was a downright pleasure to be in her company.

And Len, far away from home, with a busy and sometimes disagreeable life, and with no close friend except his boy chum, Nat Pryor, missed bright girls from his daily life.

Kate was looking at her best to-night, in an evening gown that made her a revelation to the young reporter.

"The watch again!" laughed Kate, when Len once more looked at his time-piece.

"And time to go," sighed the contented boy, rising. "I wish it weren't, Miss Kate."

But she, too, had risen, being too well-bred to offer again to detain him.

She gave him her hand, sweetly, invited him to make another call early, thanked him again heartily for all he had done, and then Len found himself being piloted through the hallway by the stiff, unbending Hodgkins.

Just as the boy was passing out through the great door he heard another door down the hallway open, and then a sharp voice call:

"Keep the door open a moment, Hodgkins."

"Why, that's Sam's voice," mused the boy. "He's going out, too, evidently."

He waited a moment on the steps, for a carriage stood at the curb below—one of the Devere carriages, he guessed.

Out came Sam, in evening dress, which was beginning to be seen a good deal more in the city, now that the summer-end was bringing the vacationers back.

"Thunder! What ails the fellow?" gasped Len, inwardly.

Sam Devere's brow was black, his eyes flashing savagely.

"I wanted to see you, Brown," he exclaimed, "and to thank you."

"There's nothing to thank me for," Len protested.

"Oh, yes, there is!" returned Sam, as the two walked down the steps together and halted at the sidewalk. "Brown, you did first-rate in getting me out of my scrape, and I suppose my father has paid you well enough for your trouble."

"We won't discuss that, please," Len retorted, coldly, for he saw and felt that a row was coming.

"No, we won't discuss that," glared Sam, his lip quivering. "What you can make out of your trade is your own business."

Len flushed hotly.

"But you've gone too far!" Sam continued hotly, turning squarely and glaring as hard as he could at the boy.

"In what way?" Len asked.

"In advising my father."

"In advising——"

"Oh, you needn't look sweetly innocent, and pretend it's all a surprise, or a dream of mine," raged the young heir of the house of Devere. "I know that you've been advising my father. In fact, he told me, pretty plainly, that my scrape was all due to my having things so easy, and in being allowed to spend a lot of money as I pleased."

"Yes, I did say that to him," Len admitted, honestly.

"And that set my father to thinking," Sam boiled over. "He's been thinking a blamed sight too much. He has actually told me to-night that after this my life is not to go on as it has gone."

"That's good," nodded the young reporter.

"He wants me to take different views of life," Sam continued, in his rage.

"Well, that'll do you good—a heap of good," hinted the young reporter. "You saw where your old style of life landed you."

"Oh, I can see that your talk is what has done the business!" choked Sam Devere. "It's you who are responsible for all that my father says he wants me to do. And if I don't do it he even threatens to cut me loose from his fortune altogether. Oh, it's all the result of your whining talk!"

"Why, what does your father want of you?" Len asked.

"Want?" choked Sam Devere. "Want? He wants me to—work!"

"It'll do you a heap of good," nodded Len, thoughtfully.

Sam Devere glared at the boy in a wrath that was speechless now.

He moved forward as if to strike the young reporter, but Len, with a quiet smile, side-stepped a little way.

"You wait!" sputtered Sam. "I'm not through with you. I'll settle with you in my own way!"

He was talking to empty air now, for Len had turned on his heel and was walking away.

"I've made two friends and one enemy," he told himself. "Well, I'm glad of the friends, and I don't believe I mind the enemy. Sam will be a good enough fellow, anyway, when he gets steadied down. Kate Devere is no fool, and she wouldn't be so fond of her brother if she didn't know there was a heap of good in him somewhere. But I wonder where it is?"

Leaving the car near the office, Len reported long before eleven o'clock.

"Too much of a lobster to stay away from the office in your own time?" was all the greeting the boy got from Mr. Benjamin, the night city editor of the regular shift.

But Len, only smiling, passed on to his own desk, picked up one of the evening papers, and tried to read the time away.

He didn't read much, however, for Kate Devere's face kept getting between his eyes and the type.

"I won't go up there much if that's the way she affects me," he told himself. "When a fellow is hustling for a newspaper he can't allow himself much time to think of girls."

Just before midnight Nat Pryor came in, stepping jauntily across the room.

"Thought I'd run up a minute, to see if you were here and wanted a spin," he exclaimed. "I'm through with my party for the night, and I'm not expected at the garage for an hour or two yet. Want to take a spin?"

"I ought to, but I won't," Len confessed.

"Mr. Brown."

It was the voice of Mr. Benjamin calling from the city editor's desk, and Len, jumping up, saw that he was the only reporter in the great city room.

"This is what you get for coming around ahead of your time," rasped out Mr. Benjamin. "I want you to hustle up to the Cantwells' house, in — street. They've just telephoned the Tenderloin police that there's a burglar at

work upstairs in the house. As the Cantwells are very rich and swell, it may mean a good story. Hustle! The police patrol wagon has just started there with the reserves."

"Then I can get you there ahead of the police," proposed Nat, eagerly, as he overheard the order. "Downstairs; quick, and jump into my machine!"

Away raced the two boys. In another minute they were speeding across the town.

Somewhere behind them, but being distanced, they could hear the gong of the police patrol wagon.

"See here," breathed our hero, eagerly, "don't go down in front of the house, Nat. Slip around to the head of the alley that runs at the back of that row of houses."

"Why?" asked Pryor, as he changed the direction.

"Because the police always dash up at the front of the house, and half the time the burglars slip out at the rear of the house and get away."

"Going to run right into trouble, eh?" demanded Nat. He pressed his lips tightly, but made no objection.

So at the head of the alley they arrived. There they left the machine, and went gliding down the alleyway, keeping well under cover of the high board wall.

Len, counting the houses as they went, stopped at last.

"That must be the Cantwell house," he nodded, pointing over the fence. "Now we'll stay here and wait."

Not two minutes had they been there when Len gave a sudden tug at his chum's arm.

Through the skylight on the Cantwell roof a man dimly appeared.

For just a second he stood looking around, then, crouching, fled swiftly, stealthily, across the adjoining roofs.

The fugitive halted at the top of the fire escape at the back of one of the houses. Down this fire-escape he went, and in through an open window.

"Come on," nudged Len. "That's six doors below the Cantwells. We know where to get our burglar now, and that's more than the police know."

"Jump into the machine," urged Nat, as they reached the head of the alley. "We'll make better time this way."

Whizz! They were off and away, then slowed up soon, as they passed the front of the Cantwell house, where a police patrol wagon stood.

"Come on, Klein!" called Len, softly, recognizing a plain-clothes officer who stood near the wagon. "Your burglar is in a house down the street. I saw him go there. Hurry!"

Klein, recognizing the young reporter, came hurrying down the street. He, Len, and Nat met at the steps of the house in which the fugitive was hiding.

"Rawley" was the name that Len read on the door-plate as Officer Klein rang the bell.

It was opened quickly. The butler of a fashionable house stood surveying them.

"I'm an officer," whispered Klein, displaying his badge. "We believe a burglar has crossed the roofs and hidden in

your house. We'll go up quietly. Don't make any fuss." But Nat, who remained behind just inside the door, was soon surrounded by curious ones whom the butler had told.

An evening function of some kind was going on in the house.

This much Len and the officer saw as they hastened up the broad flights of stairs until they reached the top floor.

"Must be in there," nodded Len, pointing to a closed door.

Klein sprang forward, turned the door-knob, darted into a lighted room.

It was a small room, furnished more like a smoking den, yet a cosy, luxurious looking place.

A startled man stood in the middle of the room. Klein pounced upon him.

"Got you, all right!" gritted the officer.

But Len Brown took one look at the surprised, struggling prisoner, then gasped:

"Hold on, Klein. This man is all right. I know him. He's a friend of mine."

It was Sam Devere!

"Friend of yours, you say?" echoed the cop. "Then what on earth is he doing in this house, playing the tricks of a burglar?"

It was too much for the young reporter.

He looked at Sam Devere, mutely imploring that young man to offer some explanation that would hold water.

"Surely Sam hasn't turned burglar to avoid going to work!" groaned the boy, inwardly. "If he has—good heavens! What sorrow I've brought on his folks!"

CHAPTER VI.

IN DEAD EARNEST.

It wasn't often that Reporter Len Brown was caught without an explanation.

But, for just once, he was in that fix.

He stood looking at the costly draperies that hung over the walls, as if the design of their fabric might help him out.

"What's your friend doing here?" insisted Officer Klein. "It was you who brought us here, Len. And now you want me to turn him loose."

"What are you two lunatics talking about?" demanded Sam, crossly. "And is this kid to follow me everywhere, trying to get me into trouble?"

"You're in trouble now," clicked Klein, "if you can't explain what looks a heap like playing burglar."

"Burglar!" snorted Sam, in high disgust. In evening clothes he didn't look the part. "I'm a guest here for the evening," he added.

Other voices sounded outside. John Rawley, the head

of the house, and now at the head of a party of his guests, had followed the arresting party upstairs.

"Here's your burglar, sir," announced Klein, as he saw Mr. Rawley's face at the door.

"Burglar?" snorted that middle-aged gentleman. "Are you crazy, officer? This is Mr. Devere, one of my guests. I sent him up here to get a cigar from my best box."

"Some mistake here, then," uttered the disgusted policeman, as he let go of Devere's collar.

Klein shot a look at our hero, but wisely and kindly refrained from speaking.

And Sam, for a wonder, refrained from scorching the boy with words.

Instead, young Devere launched into a laughing account of his adventure as the party turned to go downstairs.

But Len, half-way down the first flight, stopped suddenly.

"Why, it wasn't Sam at all that I saw go in through that window," he gasped inwardly. "It wasn't a man in evening clothes at all. What a rattled fool I am! The real burglar is either behind those hanging draperies, or in some other room."

Wheeling like a flash, without speaking to anyone this time, Len darted back into the little smoking den.

As he entered the room he was just in time to see a pair of brown-clad legs disappearing through the open window on to the fire-escape.

"After you!" jolted the young reporter, heading through the window.

His burglar was just disappearing over the edge of the roof now.

Len went up the iron ladder of that fire-escape with the skill of a sailor.

The fellow had heard him coming at last. Something more than a dozen feet from the roof a rather undersized man of forty stood glaring at our hero.

"Shut up, if you want to live!" hissed the stranger.

"Shut up?" echoed Len, loudly. "What for? You're wanted. Oh—police!"

The call carried far on the night air.

"Confound you!" cried the crook. "Why didn't you keep still? Do you think I'd let any cop take me? I'll settle you for that!"

There was a flash of steel. Len had leaped forward to close with his man, but now he retreated.

That rascal held a revolver, and was aiming it.

"I've never been taken yet!" snarled the fellow. "Too late to begin now, if I have to blow my brains out. But I'll settle you, anyway!"

Crack! Len had jumped to one side, but that bullet whizzed within a quarter of an inch of one of his temples.

Crack! This scoundrel meant business. He had fired the second time, missing his victim only by a couple of inches.

He would have wound the matter up quickly, but Len was now jumping about like a trained flea.

"Oh, I'll get you!" panted the desperado, moving after the boy.

Clutch! Mr. Burglar felt himself suddenly strangling, as a blue sleeve closed upon his throat.

Flop! Mr. Burglar was down, with a big, uniformed policeman on top of him.

That officer, at the sound of the first shot, had appeared through the Cantwell skylight.

Mr. Burglar, not being a large or powerful man, was speedily disarmed, and also handcuffed.

By this time there were four policemen on the roof, Klein among them.

"I wasn't exactly crazy, you see," smiled the reporter. "Take it all back, Klein?"

"I'd take anything back for a glimpse at this man," cried Officer Klein, bending over the prisoner. "Do you know who this is? It's Little Red Jackson, one of the biggest cracksmen in this country! He wasn't out for anything less than diamonds or bonds!"

"Red Jackson?" echoed Len. "Why, I know who he is—the pal of Pat Carren, the old-time bank burglar!"

"That's who's who," nodded Klein. "And sorry I am we didn't find Pat on this job, too. But this'll make a bit of exciting news for your Herald in the morning, all right."

Little Red Jackson wisely refrained from saying a word, now that he had been securely taken for the first time in his life.

He was lowered down to the first platform of the Rawley house, thence in through the den, and then downstairs.

All the Rawley guests were agog by this time. Klein had to stop with his prisoner, near the front door, and explain.

While the crowd clustered and listened Mr. Rawley came toward our hero. That gentleman had a very pretty young miss, all in white, on his arm.

"My daughter wishes to meet you, Mr. Brown," announced the host. "Assuredly I do," cried Jennie Rawley. "I almost know you already, Mr. Brown. Kate Devere is one of my dearest friends. She told me much about you this afternoon."

Klein was waiting while his policemen searched other houses nearby in the hope of finding Pat Carren.

"I've just introduced myself to your friend, Mr. Pryor," Jennie chattered on, turning and beckoning Nat with a smile. "He has been telling me what very interesting people you reporters are. It must be a wonderful life."

Drawn into a corner by themselves the three young people chatted interestedly for some minutes, or until Klein reported that Pat Carren was not to be found anywhere in the neighborhood.

"That reminds me that I've got to rush to the Herald office," cried Len, in sudden dismay. "I'm letting the paper go to press without the story of the night!"

Both youngsters took hurried leave of Miss Jennie, then darted down the steps.

Len paused long enough to take a look at Little Red

Jackson, as that worthy sat in the patrol wagon, with a policeman at his side.

"Feel good, do you?" jeered Jackson, with a snarl that showed his white teeth. "Len Brown, reporter on the Herald, eh? I'll remember that name. If I get loose I'll pay you for this night's attention. If I can't get loose—there are others who won't forget you."

"I don't know that I'd like to see that little crook get loose," half-shuddered Len, as he jumped into the auto beside his chum. "Red makes me think more of a poisonous snake than any man I've ever seen."

"He's bad medicine, sure," frowned Nat. "But what a pretty girl that Miss Jennie Rawley is."

"Isn't she though?" Len agreed. "A stunner! And what do you suppose?"

"Invited you to call?" asked Nat, almost enviously.

"Made me promise that we'd both call. I wonder what it is that folks find so strange and wonderful in a reporter that they want him to call and talk to them some more."

"Yes, I reckon it's you that she wants to see again," uttered Nat, giving the steering wheel a vicious turn, then swiftly setting it right again.

"Oh, she wants to see us both," Len argued, never dropping to the fact that his uneasy-looking chum was jealous.

Len was quickly at the office.

"Whew!" exclaimed Night City Editor Benjamin, when he had heard the youngster's report. "That's a bigger story than I thought it was, or I'd never have sent a lobster out on it."

"If you'd sent anybody but a lobster," Len reported, smilingly, "Red Jackson would still be at large, and there wouldn't any big news story."

"You're working your points to get off the lobster shift and on to the regular force," smiled Mr. Benjamin. "But don't stand there talking. Rush your story for a column."

It was done by the time that the lobster shift came on and Len's regular hours of work were on.

Never before had the lobster shift's night been so dull. From two to eight in the morning there was absolutely not a thing for our hero to do. He sat half-dozing in his chair, envying Nat Pryor, who was home and sound asleep.

At eight our hero stepped out on to the sidewalk beyond the Herald office.

As he did so a man of fifty, dark, rather tall, and of slender build, stepped up, eyeing him keenly.

"You're Mr. Brown, I believe?" challenged the stranger.

"Well?" asked Len.

"I'm from Sam Devere, with a message. He's in trouble again," murmured the stranger.

"What's that?" Len asked sharply.

"Oh, it's nothing that he can't get out of with a little help," the stranger went on, quickly. "But he told me to wait, and to be sure to bring you to him."

"Where is he?" Len asked, doubtfully.

"Oh, hardly more than a block from here, down on the

side street. He came down to this part of the town to hide, so you wouldn't have to go too far to see him."

Hide? That began to sound tough for the happiness of Kate Devere and her father.

Hennessy, the cop, waiting at the corner below for his relief to come, saw the pair heading off up the street.

"Them reporters keep queer company sometimes," muttered the officer, curiously. "What's Len Brown doing, now, with that old-time bad man, Pat Carren? But I suppose the lad knows his own business best!"

CHAPTER VII.

LEN MAKES A FOOL OF HIMSELF.

"What kind of a scrape is Sam Devere in this time?" Len asked of the companion whom he did not for an instant suspect of being Pat Carren.

His sole thought was one of anxiety for the feelings of Kate and her father.

Carren smiled.

"Oh, it's only a bit of hot-headedness. If you see the old man for Sam you'll be able to get it straightened out all right."

"And only last evening Sam was roasting me for all he was worth," murmured Len. "He seems to be the kind of fellow who'll use anyone when he needs 'em."

They had turned into a side street.

Carren led the way into the side entrance to a saloon. Still the boy suspected nothing. To one of Devere's habits a saloon seemed the most natural place for hiding.

Our hero's conductor led him down a long hallway to where private rooms were situated at the rear of the saloon.

Save for themselves, this hallway was deserted.

"Right in here, please," requested Carren, standing aside and slightly swinging open a baize-covered door.

Len started to go in, all unsuspecting.

Just as he passed through the door steel flashed in Carren's right hand.

Down came the point of a stiletto, aimed between the boy's shoulder-blades.

All in a second it had flashed over the young reporter that he was in danger.

There wasn't time to turn or to think.

He did the only thing that there was time to do—sank swiftly to his knees.

Chug! It was a hard, pounding noise that registered over the boy's head.

The point of Carren's blade, missing the boy through that swift drop, had been thrust deeply into the door-post.

And Carren, missing his mark, fell heavily forward with the knife.

His hand still grasped the hilt as startled Len glanced up.

"Blazes!" quivered the white-faced boy. And then—Biff! His right hand, clenched amidships on Carren, knocking the wind out of that desperate wretch.

Up like a flash, Len landed a kick squarely across the abdomen of his would-be slayer.

Down went Carren, deathly white, grasping weakly at his abdomen, and writhing.

"You people, in there!" called out Len.

From the bar-room, on the run, a bartender and a porter.

"Get an officer, one of you!" ordered the boy, sharply, displaying his own badge, which the strangers must have supposed to be an official badge.

Len heard someone running toward the street as he crouched over his late assailant, who was still too weak to attempt to get up.

"What's the row?" demanded a panting policeman, running into the hallway. "Hullo, Brown!"

"Case of attempted murder," replied Len, coolly. "I was slated for the funeral. There's the fellow's knife sticking where it struck when I dodged. I reckon you'll find the sheath for the blade in one of his pockets. But grab your man, Henderson, before he has time to move. Do you know who he is?"

"Never saw him before," replied Officer Henderson, as, drawing his club, he knelt beside the injured man.

"Then I reckon some fly cop will tell you that he's Pat Carren," divined our hero.

At the station-house the guess turned out to be correct.

To Len Brown belonged the credit of capturing the two most troublesome burglars known to the police of the country.

Then Len turned toward the Herald office, drowsy but jubilant.

"This makes all three shifts I'm working on these days," he murmured. "I hope I can draw three salaries!"

* * * * *

"It seems good to have a night off once in a while," murmured Nat.

It was about ten o'clock in the evening, a few days later.

Len was killing time, waiting for the hour when he must report for duty at the Herald office.

As Nat had nothing to do for the garage this night the two boys were sitting on the front stoop of the house where they lodged.

"It would seem good to you to have a night off, wouldn't it?" Pryor followed up.

"I suppose so," Len granted. "I never had a night off, so I don't know."

"Why don't they give the lobsters a night off, like the other men?"

"Can't. The staff's too small. We have to take our short hours in the place of a night off."

"Note for you, Mr. Brown," called a boy, running up the steps.

It was one of the Herald's night office boys who dropped an envelope.

"Short-handed to-night, so we'll have to put you on duty early to-night," ran the note from the office. "Go to the Clysmic Club, and ask Hobart Holden if there's any truth in the report that he intends to resign from board of directors of the club. Important news story, if true."

"Settles the loafing for to-night," smiled Len, as he handed the note to his chum. "See you in the morning, old fellow."

It was half an hour later when Len Brown trod the soft carpets of the big library at the Clysmic Club.

He had just sent his card to Mr. Holden, and had been shown into this deserted room to wait.

He sank into one of the big, deep, high-backed leather easy chairs.

Sitting thus, he was unobserved by two men who entered the room arm-in-arm a minute later.

They halted near the boy, still concealed by the high back of that great chair.

"Is it possible that we can catch old Dick Devere napping? He—the old fox of Millions street?" murmured one of the men.

Len, without stirring in his seat, pricked up his ears in an instant.

"We can, if he doesn't get a tip before to-morrow morning," smiled the other man. "Our brokers have their orders. They'll start a false movement at half-past nine in the morning, at the Stock Exchange. There'll be a panic—and we'll have keen old Dick Devere caught short to the tune of a few millions!"

"You will, eh?" quivered the listening boy. "I wish I knew more about that queer old Millions street game, so that I could understand what you fellows are talking about!"

"But it doesn't seem possible," protested the first speaker, still in a low voice, just behind Len's chair. "I can't realize that Dick Devere, that keen old fox of the steel trust, has had his eye off Millions street long enough to get caught."

"But he has! That barrel of trouble his fool son got into shook the old chap's nerve a good deal."

"But Devere ought to be able to rally in season from his office."

"That's where my information saves us," laughed the other speaker. "We have it straight that Devere leaves town at eight in the morning, to be gone over Sunday with his daughter. He'll be on the train when the smash comes—and his millions will drop into our pockets!"

The two men had passed on, going by our hero, but not noticing him.

By the time that they turned at the further end of the room, they beheld Len Brown sauntering slowly in their direction, as if he had just entered the library.

The two men seated themselves at the far end of the room, rang, and ordered cigars.

"Who are those men you just served?" asked Len, intercepting the waiter, and clipping a banknote into his hand.

"Mr. Douglass and Mr. Prescott," the waiter replied.

Just then Mr. Holden came in. He denied, emphatically, that the news of his intended resignation was true.

"Now for some real work," quivered the boy, as he hurriedly quitted the club, and made almost on the run for the nearest public telephone station.

First of all, he telephoned his news to the office, adding:

"I won't be at the office for two or three hours. Just dropped to a tip on a big story. Good-by!"

In another twinkling he had gotten Mr. Devere on the telephone. At least, he had the Devere house, but the reporter fumed a good deal while waiting for the old man in person.

"That you, Mr. Devere?" breathed the boy, excitedly, at last, when he heard the old man's voice. "Then don't leave the house, sir, or go to bed until you've seen me. I'm coming right over, with news I know you'll be mighty glad to hear. This is Brown—Len Brown. Good-by, sir!"

Twenty minutes later Len was in the Devere library, excitedly facing a very much wrought-up old man as Richard Devere listened and plied questions.

"Yes, yes! I understand it all, even if you don't!" cried the old man, clenching his hands, nervously. "I see through the whole plot. But to get such a stab in the dark from men like Douglass and Prescott! That's the worst of it! Why, lad, I made their fortunes."

"I hope you can stop the trick they're springing on you," Len ventured.

"Stop it?" quivered the old man. "Yes, indeed I can—thanks to you—my young friend! Your information will save me millions—perhaps my entire fortune!"

Kate Devere, who had softly entered the room, halted amazed at these words.

"Saved your fortune, papa?" echoed the girl, "And you seem greatly excited, too. Is anything wrong?"

"Something was very wrong indeed!" quavered her father. "Some of the fellows whom I thought my best friends have been trying to—but you wouldn't understand it, child. And I must have time to think, now. I must get my brokers on the wire, even at this hour of the night. And—yes, I shall need a newspaper's help in this. Brown, can I rely on you to keep this out of the morning Herald? Will you be on hand with me in my Wall street office at seven in the morning? And will you telephone my tip to your paper for publication when I ask you to?"

"Yes, to all the questions," promised Len, with alacrity.

"Then leave me, now, for I've hours of the hardest planning to do. But don't forget—at seven in the morning. Young man, I can never forget the service you've done me to-night."

"Come with me," whispered Kate, as she led our hero away from the library. "Now, have you time to sit with me for a while? For I shan't retire until papa is through in his library. Sometimes he needs me."

Len followed the girl, his eyes full of admiration for the splendidly pretty picture that she presented, in her soft gown all of white, and with one pure white rose tucked into her hair.

"Now, what is it all about, if I may ask?" inquired Kate, as she showed him to a seat in the cosy little reception room and took the seat facing him. "You can tell me safely, for papa doesn't keep any secrets from me. He calls me his chum."

"I can tell you the little I know, but that isn't much," Len replied. "Your father seems to know what to do with the information, though."

Kate listened in wonder at the recital, though she made little more of it than our hero had done.

"All I can understand," she smiled, "is that lately, when trouble threatens us, you seem to be always the one to get to our side and drive it away."

Len flushed, not knowing what to say, and rendered uncomfortable by the praise of a pretty girl who looked at him so intently.

"What has become of your brother?" he asked, to change the subject.

"Oh, Sam lives at home. He has some sort of an office downtown. The poor boy tries to make believe he's working, at last. But papa doesn't seem much pleased, and Sam seems to think that he ought to have more money allowed him."

"By jove, I've forgotten the office. I've got to get down there, and on the run, too!" cried the young reporter, rising hastily.

Kate rose, too, taking both his hands quickly in hers. She flushed slightly, though she went on bravely:

"Mr. Brown, I wonder if you understand how thankful we are to our reporter-friend? It would be a strange life, now, to get along without you!"

There's mad magic in looking down into pretty, beaming eyes. Len looked into hers, and was lost.

"I wish you couldn't get along without me," he blurted, suddenly, gripping her hands tighter.

His eyes were on hers now, so meaningly that Kate couldn't fail to guess his meaning.

Her face went white, all in an instant.

"Oh, I know it!" cried the boy, coming suddenly to himself.

Then, coward-like, he turned, fleeing for the door.

At the door he caught up his hat.

Kate Devere was looking at him in wonderment.

"What do you know?" she insisted.

"That I made a fool out of myself!" he blurted, and was gone.

Yet, once outside on the sidewalk, he halted, struck dumb.

"Did I dream that?" he demanded, pinching himself, "or did she really say it as I ran?"

For what he now thought he had heard Kate Devere's soft voice reply to him was:

"Perhaps you're not a fool at all!"

"Did she really say that?" the young reporter quavered. "Did she—can she——"

He half-turned to go up the steps.

"I've a good mind to go back and face that out," he muttered, trembling from head to foot.

Then:

"No, sir-ree! Once in twenty-four hours is often enough to be a plumb, daffy fool!"

CHAPTER VIII.

DOWN IN MILLIONS STREET.

There was something doing down in the great money market of the town.

That street on which the huge Stock Exchange Building stood was thronged this morning by the excited crowds.

Everyone who passed seemed a-quiver with the excitement that always hovers over the market on the days of great disasters.

At nine o'clock the Stock Exchange had opened quietly enough.

Just at 9.30 things began to look odd in steel.

Within a few minutes the flurry, carefully engineered by someone, had struck the Board.

There was a gasp, and men tried to figure out what was happening.

Then, swiftly, the news flew around.

The shorts were being driven to cover!

But what was this latest news? Richard Devere, the great steel man, about to be caught short and ruined?

After that things toppled worse than ever.

Hundreds of men—women, too—besieged the offices of Richard Devere.

But to all the clerks inside gave the same information—that nothing could be said about the whereabouts of the head of the office.

"Devere is going—crashing down to ruin!" was the cry that rose through the Street.

It was enough to scare the panic-stricken mob of speculators. They ordered their brokers without reason during the next hour.

But in Devere's private office sat the old man. Two others were there with him behind the locked doors. One was a member of the old man's firm of brokers. The other was Len Brown, lobster reporter for the Herald.

The broker was seated at a private telephone wire, which connected his own firm's office with Devere's.

Over this wire was coming the firm's reports; back were going the orders of the great man of the steel market.

After the first three-quarters of an hour all of the old man's uneasiness had disappeared.

"We're getting things our way on the Board now," he smiled to our hero. "We'll soon have Douglass and Prescott where they'll regret their treachery."

More news came in over the telephone from the broker's firm.

Richard Devere heard it, then wheeled upon our hero.

"Get your paper on the wire, Brown!" he called, eagerly. "Send them my message, and let them do what they want with it. But they'll print it—for it's real news!"

This was the message that Len sent over the wire to the Herald:

"Richard Devere is not out of town, as rumored. He is in his inner office, managing the campaign with all his old zeal and love of battle. He will have his enemies down flat within the hour. Mr. Devere urges all who follow him to get over the panicky feeling, and to keep steady on Steel. The market is going to be steady from now on, for Mr. Devere has the steel stocks in firm control."

That message sent, the three in the magnate's office waited until they heard the boys in the street calling out the new evening edition of the Herald.

"The market's feeling the news strongly, Mr. Devere," smiled Broker Fergus, turning around from his telephone. "In twenty minutes more your enemies will be down. Nothing can save them now. Better go into the outer office and let your friends know that you're really on hand."

Smiling, no matter how unsteady he felt under the surface, the old man unlocked his office and passed into the rooms beyond.

Len, all but fagged out with the excitement of the last hour, leaned back in his chair.

Had he not known that he was wide awake, it would have been like a dream.

But he could not doubt that this was really Kate now moving radiantly into the inner office.

She came straight over to our hero, who, remembering the fool he had made of himself the night before, rose, too, blushing furiously.

But Kate, without a sign of recollection, or the least suspicion of a blush, took his hand joyously.

"I've just had a word with papa," she murmured. "He has told me that the market is all right, at last. But he looked almost haggard when he added that, with the fearful raid attempted to-day, he'd have been all but a beggar if it hadn't been for the news you brought him last night."

"It was a chance tip," stammered Len, confusedly. "Of course, I took it to him for what it was worth. That wasn't much to do, was it?"

"I don't know," cried Kate, tremulously. "I know only that we seem to owe everything to you. And, oh! I'm glad it's so!"

Her eyes were on his again, earnestly. Len could not turn away without appearing rude. He trembled, for once more the wild temptation to make a fool of himself was coming on.

Then his hands gripped, though Kate did not see it. "Get a grip on yourself, boy!" he murmured.

"Do you do as wonderful things for everyone that you

find in trouble?" asked the girl, then laughed merrily, for Len seemed at a loss for an answer.

"Do you know what has just come into my head? It ought to have been there long ago," he cried, earnestly. "Can you guess what it is?"

"No," answered Kate, but she changed color and looked down.

"Why," went on Len, resolutely, though it hurt, "it has just struck me that a reporter's place, when his assignment has been covered, is back at his office."

"Then——"

"I've got to jump for the office—in a hurry, Miss Kate. I'll stand talking all day, if I don't. Good-morning!"

With a bow he was gone, treading briskly, resolutely, leaving a much-puzzled girl behind him.

That fit of resolution kept up all the way to the elevator.

Len was in the elevator and dropped to the ground floor before he had time to think more.

But out in the street, just past the entrance of the building, Len halted suddenly.

All around him boys were crying the Herald, with his own big financial "scoop" in it, but of that Len, who had brought the whole startling situation about in Millions street, gave never a thought.

"Was I a fool?" he wondered. "Or did I let my golden opportunity slip? One thing is certain, anyway. After running off so abruptly from Kate she'll be offended. I'll never get that opportunity back again!"

And then followed the other thought:

"Opportunity? Do I want another one? What ails me, anyway? Am I in love with Kate? Oh, I suppose I am. Confound it, I know I am! Bosh! Was there ever a bigger idiot? A twelve-dollar kid on the lobster shift—in love with the only daughter of one of the biggest men in the steel market!"

Vengefully, Len pounded his head. No one heeded him in that crush on Millions street.

But still he lingered, backed up against the wall of the building.

"Suppose I go back and have it out—if there's a chance?" he murmured. "If Kate turns me down she'll do it so good and hard that there'll never be another chance in the same direction. Yes, I'll go back up to her father's office! No, I won't either!"

Between two minds the young reporter hesitated thus.

At last his mind made up—for a second—to get back to the Herald office, he stepped as far as the curb. There he halted.

"Stranger things have happened," he murmured.

Then:

"Don't be a fool, Len! Get out of this while you've got a shred of sanity left!"

He stepped into the crowded roadway, looking neither to the right nor the left, intent only on putting himself on the other side of the street.

Yet, by the time he reached the middle of the road there was a clear space there.

There had been a clanging of bells, a scurrying of vehicles and foot passengers, but Len, his mind intent on one subject only, had realized nothing of it all.

Clang! Toot! Some reckless speculator, in haste to reach his office, was driving an automobile like mad down Millions street!

Len turned, looked up—then seemed frozen with dread. There wasn't even time to gather himself for the spring out of harm's way.

That speedy car seemed right on top of him, already. But there had been another sound—a muffled shriek just behind.

Then Len felt himself seized by small, soft hands—strong hands, too—for the girl's rush carried Len and herself just out of harm's way toward the opposite gutter.

But a high-keyed roar of horror went up from the thousands who saw.

For Kate Devere, though she had carried herself and Len just out of the auto's path, had landed them both just before the pounding hoofs of galloping horses hitched to a fire engine!

It was out of one death and into another!

CHAPTER IX.

THE SON OBJECTS.

In that swift, flashing second, Len had recognized Kate. He saw their new peril, too—or, rather, it flashed on him through some rapid sixth sense.

Had he thought only of himself he could have darted past those flying hoofs and reached the sidewalk.

But, like lightning, Len's arm was around Kate's waist. He caught her, hurled her for the sidewalk, and plunged on blindly.

One of his feet was just grazed by a wheel of the swift-moving engine as it whizzed past.

Len had landed on his knees, but he didn't stay there.

Like a flash he was up again, catching Kate, who had fallen on her side, and drawing her tenderly erect ere any one else could stir to aid.

"Are you hurt?" he cried, anxiously. "I didn't mean to be rough."

"Rough?" panted Kate, scornfully. "You saved my life!"

"If you hadn't saved mine I wouldn't have been there to do it!"

The crowd, having caught its breath and come out of its daze, was cheering like mad.

Across the street, now clear of vehicles, strode Richard Devere, at the head of scores of other men.

"It was careless of you to be in the middle of the street

that way," scolded Kate. "What on earth were you thinking of?"

"You!"

It was out, that word, before Len could recall it.

Kate bit her lips, then flushed.

"Don't think of me again, if it has that effect," she commanded, a bit ironically.

"Kate! Len Brown! You two young people are enough to cause heart disease in an old man!" panted the girl's father, reaching them after pushing his way through the curious throng.

The crowd was gathering so fast that Richard Devere, seeing his own auto in the distance, held up his hand in imperative signal.

Still the crowd pressed around the three people who cared nothing for strangers.

A dozen men insisted on shaking hands with Len.

Two or three fellows, bolder than the rest, insisted on the same privilege with Kate Devere, but the girl froze them into retreat.

But still the cheers and the comments kept up. Millions street was becoming packed with the jam.

Sam Devere came out of one of the city's greatest banks, near by.

He caught sight of his father, of Kate and that "lobster reporter," and he scowled.

"What's happened?" he questioned of a young man who stood at the top of the bank's steps.

"See that young couple over there, and the old man?"

"Of course," grunted Sam.

"Girl just got the fellow out of the track of an auto, but right in front of a fire engine. Fellow, swift as thought, swung the girl out of danger. Dandiest double rescue you ever saw!"

"The deuce!" grated Sam, under his breath.

"See the old man!" chuckled Sam's informant. "He's got an arm on the shoulder of each. Say, I'll bet that old man is one of the solid money kings of Millions street!"

But Sam only snorted, his brow as black as an angry pirate's.

He had just been in the bank, trying to borrow money on his personal note, on the strength of being his rich father's son.

But the bank president had told him, politely, though firmly, that any note cashed for the son must bear the father's endorsement.

"Here I am, trotting around like a beggar, and ordered to go to work!" gulped Sam, as he glared over the hero-worshipping crowd. "See the old man gush over that pauper of a cheeky newspaper kid! That kid'll take my place with the old man if I don't look out! Len Brown, if I could raise any money I'd spend it on putting you out of my path! But here I am, with only a dollar or two to my name."

As if to inflame his wrath, Sam Devere thrust a hand into his trousers' pocket, bringing to light the small

handful of change that constituted the whole of his cash funds in life.

"Did ever a fellow get used like that before?" he snarled to himself.

Yet just an instant later a gleam of savage joy shot into his eyes, which rested on a sparkling diamond ring on his finger.

"What a fool I am!" he ground out. "Here I've got jewelry that'll sell for fifteen or twenty thousand dollars! And I've been trying to raise a paltry thousand on a beggarly note! Sam Devere, you're a fool! Len Brown, your fun will stop!"

This latter, though spoken below his breath, was caused by the sight of Len following his father and Kate into the family automobile.

Sam slunk back into the doorway, that they might not see him as the great car moved by.

Richard Devere sat on the rear seat of the auto, between his daughter and the young reporter.

Len, who was again fighting the battle against "making a fool of himself," breathed more easily.

There was no danger, now, that a pair of eyes, looking into his, would make him forget the great gulf between this girl and himself.

"Now, young man, you'll come home with us, won't you?" urged Richard Devere.

"You forget," spoke the young reporter, "that I've had no sleep."

"Why, surely enough, you haven't," cried the old man, remorsefully. "Then, as Kate has, we'll take you to your own quarters first."

"If you'll be good enough," Len murmured, gratefully, adding to himself:

"I don't believe Kate has any idea just how humble my place is in life. A view of that lodging-house, and the knowledge that my room is up at the top of it, will make her understand—if she needs to."

When they stopped, later, before the door of the lodging-house, Kate looked at it so doubtfully that our hero almost feared he had overdone his part.

But the girl was not despising the youth for living there. She merely wondered how such a capable, bright young fellow could believe this dreary-looking house to be a good enough home for him.

Then Len climbed the stairs to his room. On the table he found a note from the office—from the city editor-in-chief.

"You've been doing bully," ran the note. "Promoted to the regular night staff. Salary much larger. Take to-night off. Report to-morrow night."

"Brief, but to the point," glowed the happy youngster. "I'm no longer a lobster, then. Wonder how much the new salary will be?"

That was what he was thinking of as he undressed, trying to keep the thought of Kate's sweet face out of his mind.

Yet he lay awake for a couple of hours, thinking of her.

Then youth conquered, and he went to sleep.

It was just before dark when he awoke again. Nat woke him, coming into the room.

Nat looked wonderfully happy. Finally he blurted:

"Say, Len, old fellow, come out to supper to-night. Not to a hash-house. We'll go to something good."

"Struck a good tip from some customer?" smiled Len, as he sat up and began to dress.

"Better than that," Nat replied, but said no more, so Len asked no further questions.

But they ate, gorgeously, over at one of the great restaurants of the town.

It was well after dark when they returned to that familiar stoop to sit down and chat.

Ten minutes afterwards a messenger-boy arrived, with a note from the office.

"That is strange," mused Len, as he read. "I was to have to-night off, but this is a note from the managing editor. Why, I never even saw him. He always sits poked away in his private office. But, anyway, he orders me to go to a certain place, to meet a certain party, and get a news story. Well, Nat, it spoils our chat. Too bad!"

A newspaper man moves when he gets the order. Len walked briskly until he reached a street car that would take him near his destination.

It was to one of the cheap, big, crowded bar-rooms over on the water-front that our hero's instructions took him. He was under orders to meet a man who would introduce himself as Tom Jarrold. He was to get Jarrold's story and take it to the Herald office.

The place was steaming hot, and reeking with bad tobacco smoke as our hero entered.

He stood looking around over the three or four score of men seated at tables. Over in one corner a wheezy orchestra played.

"Looking for someone?" asked an oily voice in his ear.

"Depends," answered Len, looking without great favor at the coarse yet insinuating face of the man of forty who had accosted him.

"Your name Brown?" persisted the fellow.

"Depends on what your name is."

"Jarrold," winked the other.

"Then you're my man."

"Come back here to a private room, old man."

Len followed into one of the little walled-off cabinets at the back of the place.

"What are you drinking?" Jarrold inquired, as he pressed a button for a waiter.

"I never drink anything, thank you."

"Seltzer, then?"

"Oh, a seltzer'll be all right," nodded the young reporter.

The drinks were brought and laid on the table.

"That your handkerchief on the floor?" asked the stranger.

As Len turned to look the fellow stealthily poured a few drops from a vial into the young reporter's glass.

CHAPTER X.

LEN GOES ON THE WARPATH.

"That's not my handkerchief," retorted Len, turning around.

"Thought it might be," muttered the stranger. "Well, here's hearty. Drink it up."

"Wait a minute," said Len, quietly, reaching for the button.

"What's up?"

"Why, we might as well smoke, too," smiled Len.

The waiter appeared in the doorway.

"Bring a policeman," ordered Len, very quietly.

The waiter looked astonished, but he was not a circumstance to the fellow who answered to the name of Jarrold.

"What's that?" he gasped.

"I wasn't talking to you," returned Len, still quietly. "Waiter, a policeman, please."

"But what's wrong?" demanded the waiter.

"This drink," replied Len, laying a hand on his glass.

"That's up to me, then, boss. What ails it?"

"You didn't do it, waiter, but there are knockout drops in my glass. Watch this fellow, and you'll see that he's trying to slide the vial out of the palm of his right hand."

Jarrold sprang up, his face purple with rage.

"It's a blamed lie," he uttered.

"No, it isn't," Len retorted, speaking as loudly. "You tried to dope me, but I know the trick, and I saw your hand over my glass."

Uttering a yell of rage, Len's companion seized the boy's glass, dashing the contents against the wall.

"That's proof enough," clicked the young reporter.

"Waiter, you're mighty slow getting that policeman." There was a crowd about the little door now.

The story spread, others flocking down to join the crowd.

"You ought to be punched for making up a yarn like that," growled the stranger.

"Maybe," smiled Len, coolly.

"I'm through with you. I quit you—now!"

But the crowd was hemming so thick about them that "Jarrold" had to push his way through to the front door.

And there he was met by a policeman.

"Officer," rang the boy's voice, "you'd better get this fellow and have him looked over at the station-house. You'll find that he belongs to some regular Pete gang."

"Pete" is the name given, in criminal slang, to knockout drops.

The policeman took a grip on Jarrold's collar, then turned to our hero.

"Who are you that makes the charge?"

"Brown, reporter on the Herald," Len returned. He displayed his badge, then handed the officer a card.

"Oh, that's all right," responded the policeman, more graciously. "I'll take this gent down for a look-over at the station-house. If we hold him, you'll be in court when notified?"

"Sure thing," nodded Len.

"Come on—Pete," grinned the policeman.

As officer and prisoner departed Len, too, slid out of the crowd.

While talking to the policeman, the young reporter had noted one tall, slim young man, much better dressed than the other patrons of the place.

This young man had been looking on with keen interest. He disappeared in a hurry, however, after the officer had gone away with his man.

And Len, in a jiffy, was shadowing this slim young man, from the other side of the street.

"I'll keep my eye on that chap," muttered the boy, as he strolled along observantly. "Mr. Slim comes from the people who put Jarrold up to that job. Lord, what an easy job it was. All somebody had to do was to bribe an office-boy to bring him a few sheets of Herald note-paper and envelopes to match. Then a type-written note and a fake signature. Whew! That note never came from the managing editor."

Len's mind was active with this newest problem.

"Whoever wanted me knocked out didn't want it done for the fun of the thing. What could have been behind it all? Was it some pal of Pat Carren and Red Jackson? Or did someone down in Millions street, who got pinched to-day, find out who caused the trouble? By Jupiter, I'll keep on the war-path until I find out."

Mr. Slim got aboard of a street car. Len did the simple trick of getting aboard the following car and keeping an eye on the one ahead.

The chase led direct to a rather handsome, closely-curtained house uptown.

"So this is where the trail leads?" murmured the boy, eagerly, as he saw Mr. Slim ascend the steps. "Gansewell's swell gaming den."

No sooner had Mr. Slim vanished inside than Len ran up the steps, pressing the signal button at the door.

"I'm on the Herald. Nothing against the place. Just want to have a little fun for the evening," whispered Len, confidentially, displaying his badge.

A grunt of doubt, then the lookout swung the door open. Len knew there was nothing on the parlor at Gansewell's, except a free restaurant and wine-room for the patrons of the place.

"I'll try upstairs first," he decided.

Up on the first floor the doors of the rooms were wide open.

There was a roulette table in front, with a busy, eager crowd watching the play.

In a back room there was a faro game in progress.

But here Len saw what he wanted all at once—and it gave him a jolt!

In one corner stood Mr. Slim, talking in earnest whispers with—Sam Devere!

"Oho! That's who wants me out of the way," throbbed the boy. "Sam! I wouldn't have thought it. He's a hot-headed fellow, with some mean streaks, but I didn't think he'd be at the bottom of a cold-blooded murder. I don't believe it now. There was something else in the wind, if they could only get me off somewhere before I came to. I'll get out of here!"

He drew back into the hallway, where Sam could not by any chance see him.

"I'll think it over whether to let Sam know what I know," he thought. "Maybe I won't let him know at all. The young idiot! He tells his father that he thinks he has found a business where there are good chances of making money. Does he mean this place—the card game? The fool! This is the business to lose money at!"

"Not going to play any more to-night?" sounded a voice near the door.

"Can't," replied a dispirited voice. "Broke."

A young man in evening clothes, a fine-looking young fellow, but with a face marred by dissipation, came quickly, nervously out into the hallway.

He headed straight for the door of a small room near by, looked in, then darted in there.

But as the young man stepped nervously over the threshold, his right hand sought the hip pocket.

"Great Scott! The idiot isn't going to blow his brains out, is he?" quivered Len.

Never even pausing to think, the young Herald reporter sprang for the door.

He reached the threshold in time to see the dissipated young man raising a revolver to his head.

"Stop it!" ground out Len, bounding into the room. "You shan't! Stop!"

"Take it yourself, then—you meddler!" shot out the would-be suicide.

He whirled around, aimed the weapon swiftly at Len Brown, and pulled the trigger.

Flash and report came together.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SINS OF THE IDLE.

At the sound of the shot all the habitues of the place rushed to the scene.

They found Len, by whose shoulder the bullet had sped, grappling with the young man—fighting for the handling of the gun.

"Stop this all!" sharply commanded the manager of Gansewell's, darting into the room. "Give me that gun."

A powerful man, he soon had it, Len aiding.

"Rawley, that wasn't the act of a friend—to do it here," reproached the manager, sternly. "There was nothing to do it for, anyway."

Young Rawley, held by two men who had seized him, glowered darkly at Len Brown.

"It's all that young puppy's fault," he snarled. "I'd have had the job done if it hadn't been for him."

"Who are you, anyway, young man?" demanded the manager, wheeling upon our hero. "I don't seem to remember having seen you here before."

"That's a Herald reporter," called the lookout, who had hastened to the door.

"A reporter? You let him in here?" blazed the manager.

"Sure!" retorted the lookout, doggedly. "No orders against it."

"Young man," demanded the manager sternly, while others in the crowd showed uneasiness, "you're not going to say anything about this in your paper, are you?"

"I'm going to forget it," Len agreed, smilingly. "I wouldn't have jumped in, except to stop this young fellow's fool act."

"You're a wise boy," nodded the manager, gratefully. "Gentlemen, will you kindly resume your play. This was just the act of a moment of impulse on the part of the young man. He's sorry for it already. Back to your tables, please, as the easiest way to end it all."

But one of the onlookers remained there—Sam Devere.

That young man knew that our hero had already seen him. There was nothing to be gained by retreating.

"Come down to my office, will you, Mr. Rawley?" coaxed the manager. "I want just a few words with you."

"Come along with me, Sam," begged young Rawley, turning to Devere. "I'm a bit unsteady. I need someone by me."

"Invite me, too," whispered Len to the manager.

The latter replied by thrusting his arm under Len's and leading the way downstairs to an office at the rear.

"Now, we four are alone," went on the manager, after he had closed and locked the door. "I want a little talk with you. Rawley, a man is always a fool who takes the luck of the table so hard that he tries to end his life. There's no sense in it. If you've gone too far, keep away from the table until you've built your pocketbook back to where it was. But never take gaming losses as if they amounted to anything."

"It's always easy to talk," sneered Rawley. "But you don't know anything about my circumstances."

They went on talking together, while Sam demanded of our hero, in an undertone:

"You're following me up to carry tales to my father?"

"You ought to know me better than that," Len retorted with spirit. "When did I ever do you a mean trick?"

"When you induced my father to cut off my handsome allowance!" glowered Sam Devere.

"That was to keep you out of just such places as this."

"You don't mean to carry tales to my father?" persisted young Devere.

"Not for a moment."

"Then why are you here?"

"Sam," replied the young reporter "you ought to know."

"I don't understand you."

"Oh, yes, you do. And you know that I understand you, too. I am here because I shadowed the chap who came to report how your scheme for knockout drops worked. I saw him report to you."

"You're going to carry a yarn like that to my father, too, I suppose?" cried Sam, paling.

"If you think that, Sam, forget it. I don't want to do any harm between you and your father. I'd give a whole lot if I could bring you and your father together. And your father's more anxious for it than I am. All that stands in your way, Sam, is yourself."

"But my father won't restore my allowance."

"No; but he'll do what's better. He'll give you some chance to get into honest hard work, such as other men have to do. He'll help you to earn your own money. Go back to your father, Sam, and have a real talk with him—such a talk as a son should have with his father—such a talk as your father'd give the world for."

In his earnest appeal Len had laid one hand on Sam's shoulder.

"You're not a bad fellow, Sam," he urged. "All that ails you is that you got into a bad way. Get out of it. Keep out of it. Be the kind of man that your father can take pride in. It's easier than you think."

"See here," broke in Rawley, turning away from the manager and breaking in on Len, "are you going to disgrace me in the columns of your paper?"

"The paper that employs me," Len replied with spirit, "has better use for its columns."

"He doesn't know who you are, anyway," urged the manager, in an undertone.

"Yes, I do," Len shot back. "He's Ted Rawley, friend of Sam Devere, and son of John Rawley—brother of Jennie Rawley. You see, Mr. Rawley, I know all about you. But I don't intend to print a line about you. Now, see here, Mr. Rawley, I've been advising Sam Devere to open up in a good clean talk to his father. I advise you to do the same with your father. Both of you young men are in trouble at home, but you don't either of you need to be. Do as I advise you, and life'll seem brighter and happier to-night."

"Open up and tell my father all?" echoed young Rawley, bitterly. "I guess not. I'd see my finish, if I did."

"Then see here!" proposed Len, jumping on a new tack.

"Richard Devere is a friend of your father's, Rawley. Sam's going home and talk it out with his father. You go along with Sam, and talk it out, both of you. Rawley, you can take Richard Devere's good advice as safely as you can take your own father's. Go ahead, now!"

"If we do that," broke in Sam, "will you go with us to the old man, Brown?"

"Sure!" glowed the reporter.

"And you'll go as our friend?"

"Sure again!"

Then, as he turned to the manager's desk, Len called back over his shoulder:

"Wait a minute."

While the manager of Gansewell's looked on in surprise, Len seated himself, calling up Central over the telephone.

Sam started when he heard the number for which our hero called.

"I want to talk to Mr. Richard Devere personally," was the message Len sent over the wire. "Tell him it's Brown, the reporter. Tell him I've got something very important to say."

And then, as soon as he heard Richard Devere's voice on the wire, our hero announced:

"Mr. Devere, I've got the best kind of news for you. I am with your son, and he wants to become your son in earnest. He wants a long talk with you this evening. And he wants to bring with him young Rawley. Will you see them both—and me, too?"

All in the room could hear the hearty "Yes!" that jumped back over the telephone wire.

"That's all right," laughed Len, easily, "and good business to boot. Now, see here, as I know you won't either one of you back out, now that the chance has come to save yourselves, I'm going to let you two go up to the Devere house ahead of me, while I take a run to the office first. No! You needn't jump and fidget. I give you my word that not a line about this will come out in my paper. Most people think reporters print all they know about other folks. Lord, if they did, the town would be in a riot all the time."

Len's heart was swelling with joy as he followed the young men out of the place.

Then Len bade Sam Devere and Ted Rawley good-evening for an hour or two, and started on his own solitary way to the Herald office.

Sam and young Rawley kept their word like men, now that the die was cast in good earnest.

They went straight to Richard Devere, were received with open arms by the old man, and led into his library.

There the talk went on earnestly for an hour or more.

At eleven Len had still failed to put in an appearance.

Richard Devere called up the Herald office over the telephone.

"Brown was here, and left nearly two hours ago," was the word from the Herald city department.

"I'm more worried than I've been in many a day," groaned the old man, rising and pacing the floor of his library.

"I'm afraid the young fellow has a good many enemies," broke in Sam.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

"I'm not wanted up at Devere's very early, if at all," mused Len, as he stepped away from the Herald building. "It's such a fine night I'll take a walk to kill time."

It was past midnight when he finally decided to go to Devere's.

He thought they might have retired, but decided to go there, anyway.

The entrance of the Devere mansion proved, however, to be brightly lighted.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Devere is up yet," replied Hodgkins, "and he's been asking for you most particular, sir. He'll be delighted to know that you've got here at last. I was to take you right to the library, sir."

As Len passed the door of the drawing-room he heard laughing young voices there, Kate's among others.

Richard Devere rose quickly when he saw who his caller was, and came forward with eager, outstretched hand.

Young Devere and Young Rawley, who were also in the room, arose, too.

Both looked mightily pleased over something.

"Thank heaven you're here, Brown!" cried the old man. "I've been worried about you."

"I thought it would be better for you to be alone," smiled Len, "and so delayed my coming."

"Brown," and there was a sobbing catch in the old man's voice, "I don't know how to say what I want to say to you. You've done so much for me. Why, even only to-day you've saved my fortune for me, and—what's a bigger thing—you've brought my son back to me."

Richard Devere's arm was around the young reporter's shoulders.

"I guess, dad," suggested Sam, "that Ted and I will leave you two together. You may feel better then."

"Well, well, well, what times these are!" gasped the old man, as he sank back into his chair, and pointed out another for Len, after the young men had gone. "Brown, I thought I had had all my real luck years ago. You've taught me differently!"

"I wonder if you have any idea what happiness you've brought to two families? For John Rawley has been here to-night, too. He's in the drawing-room now, with his daughter Jennie, and Kate. And Kate's almost dying for the privilege of thanking you, young man. Will you go in and see her now?"

"Not just yet—please," Len begged.

"What? Why? What's this?" demanded Mr. Devere, looking sharply at the boy.

Then a shade of disappointment came into his face as he asked:

"See here, you young people haven't been having any trouble, have you?"

"I could almost wish there was," Len replied.

"Why?" The question was shot out.

"If you keep on looking at me the way you're looking

now, Mr. Devere, it won't take you long to see," murmured the young reporter.

Richard Devere continued scanning the boy's face.

"Brown, has there been anything between you and my daughter?"

"In what way do you mean, sir?"

"Anything like—er—love passages?"

"It came mighty near it, sir—on my part," replied the boy.

"Do you mean that you care for Kate?"

"There isn't anyone else that I care for a tenth part as much!"

"Have you spoken to her?"

"Good Lord, no! That's what I'm trying my level best to dodge."

"Why?"

"Do you know what I am, sir?"

"I'm just beginning to get an idea of what a splendid fellow you are."

"I mean, Mr. Devere, do you realize what my financial standing is? I've been a twelve-dollar reporter on the lobster shift, which means the very bottom of the ladder. I've been promoted to the regular staff at some promised increase of pay, but it'll take me years yet to make myself one of the star men on the staff, and the best pay given a reporter is something like seventy-five or eighty dollars a week. Your daughter will be an heiress to millions."

"Then she wouldn't be any expense to you, would she?" commented the old man, dryly.

"But would you want her to come down to my scale of living, sir? Or would you expect to see me satisfied with being a privileged boarder in the kind of a home she has the right to expect?"

"If you were worth a million dollars I suppose you'd talk differently?" suggested Mr. Devere.

"I certainly would!"

"One point disposed of," clicked Mr. Devere. "You ARE worth a million—at least, you will be as soon as the lawyers can get at work in the morning. No, SIR! Be silent, if you please."

Then, his eyes warm, moist, kindly, Richard Devere went on:

"Len, I'm going to have my way about making over a million to you. It won't be any use to try to get in my way. It's got to be done, and it's going to be done. Even then, what does that amount to? It isn't anywhere near a repayment of what you've done for me. I simply can't pay you! So now that much is settled. You're a millionaire, Len, and the new life is before you. Go in and ask Kate now, if you want. Whether she'll have you is something that I don't know. I wish I did. She's a girl that can't be driven, Len. But, come what may, you're a son of mine in one way or another! And now I'm going to send for Kate."

And send the old man did, and left the young people alone in the library.

It wasn't all settled in that one talk, and it wasn't all

settled in a week or a month, either, but Len Brown won his wife in the end.

Nor, though he got his million as promised, did he think of leaving the Herald.

On the contrary, bringing his mother to town to manage his new bachelor home, he stayed and worked harder than ever, backing up his own claim that the rich have no right to be idle.

In the next year Len Brown made himself, beyond any manner of doubt, the Herald's star reporter.

Nor did Nat Pryor stay down at the bottom of the ladder, either.

The news that had made Nat so happy on that night when our hero also found his great happiness, was that Nat's invention was going to be a big success.

Invention? Why, a fellow with real brains doesn't work at anything forever without finding out something that no one else had ever suspected.

Nat's invention was an improvement in the gearing of automobiles.

His patent brought him fifty thousand dollars down. His royalties from that invention now amount to a handsome yearly income.

Gambler Dan Sweeny recovered, and vanished somewhere in the West.

The Carren-Jackson crowd went the way of criminals—that is, behind iron bars.

Spike Dullivan died the other day, in a spree.

Sam Devere and Ted Rawley are partners, now, in a grain brokerage office. They aren't yet enormously rich through their own endeavors, but they are working hard and honestly, and satisfied with their lives.

Len and Nat are still single—but they won't be very long.

Our hero's wedding with Kate Devere will take place next week.

Nat's nuptials with Jennie Rawley are scheduled for next month.

THE END.

A stirring tale of life in Corsica, the birthplace of Napoleon, is the next treat that is scheduled for our readers. "UNDER THE VENDETTA'S STEEL; OR, A YANKEE BOY IN CORSICA," written by Lieut. J. J. Barry, will be published complete in No. 21 of "The Wide Awake Weekly," out next week. The interest in this narrative is intense from cover to cover. It makes a book that you simply can't put down until you've read it from beginning to end!

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